

MAP SHOWING THE JO

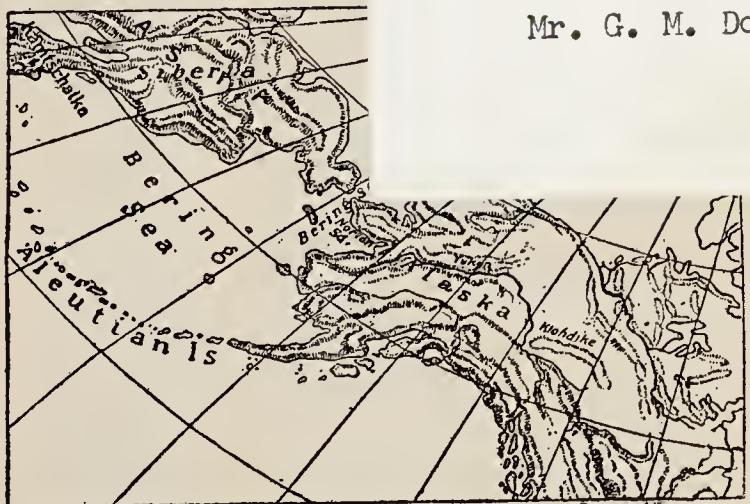


L A S K



PRESENTED BY

Mr. G. M. Douglas



OF SAKHAWACHIAK

FROZEN JUSTICE
A STORY OF ALASKA

L. W. Douglas

SOME
BORZOI-GYLDENDAL BOOKS

THE MIRACLES OF CLARA VAN HAAG
Johannes Buchholz

VAN ZANTEN'S HAPPY DAYS
Laurids Bruun

EGHOLM AND HIS GOD
Johannes Buchholz

THE PROMISED ISLE
Laurids Bruun

THE RED GARDEN
Henning Kehler

FROZEN JUSTICE
Ejnar Mikkelsen

TWO DEAD MEN
Jens Anker

FROZEN JUSTICE

A STORY OF ALASKA

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH OF
EJNAR MIKKELSEN
by A. G. JAYNE



NEW YORK
ALFRED · A · KNOPF
MCMXXII

PT 8175 . M62 F 115

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY
ALFRED A. KNOPF, INC.

Published, September, 1922

22-19485

*Set up, electrotyped, and printed by the Vail-Ballou Co., Binghamton, N. Y.
Paper supplied by Perkins-Goodwin Co., New York, N. Y.
Bound by the H. Wolff Estate, New York, N. Y.*

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FROZEN JUSTICE
A STORY OF ALASKA

19618

A faint, large watermark-like image of a classical building with four columns and a triangular pediment occupies the center of the page.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/frozenjusticesto0000mikk>

I

FAR up in Alaska, at its northernmost point and walled in by ice, lies an Eskimo settlement. It is a big one, for more than five hundred men with their women and children call it home.

Among the Eskimos the settlement is called Nuwuk, but in the white man's language its name is Point Barrow.

Along the low, sandy foreshore, on a stretch of four or five miles, stands hut after hut, built of wood, made snug with turf; and outside each hut is a platform, raised high above the ground. On this all the household goods are stored: meat, blubber, skin-bladders full of oil, hides tanned and raw, clothes old and new, dog-harness, kayaks, sledges, spears, lances, weapons and tools of all sorts—everything an Eskimo has use for is here, lashed together with stout sealskin thongs, safe from the furious winter storms, from being buried under the snow, but above all from the evil designs of the dogs.

In summer the promontory is green and gay with flowers; the houses are forsaken, and up on

the highest ridge, a little further from the sea and looking out over it and over the great lagoon, stands tent after tent—the Eskimos' summer camp.

Outside the tents sit the women shouting to each other while their busy hands clean and scrape hides. Old women, bent with toil and racked by rheumatism, whose faces bear the deep impress of half a century's battle with all the forces of Nature, with hunger and want, are warming their aged bodies in the rays of the sun—following them around and finding the warmest place. But they are not idle, nobody in Nuwuk is that; they are still at work, chewing hide and mending old clothing.

There are children everywhere, running in and out among the tents and playing. The boys, who will one day be hunters, are practising manly sports, throwing spears at birds or the beasts of the field, while the little girls stand in groups looking on, the smallest with a scrap of fur over their arm—their doll—the bigger ones carrying on their backs a little brother or sister, who looks out upon the wide world with great wondering eyes from the warm shelter of the fur anorak.

Round about, among the women, among the children, in the tents, all over the settlement, dogs roam searching for food or hunting for an enemy; they howl, bark, show their teeth with

Frozen Justice

3

ugly snarls, looking like murder, but not meaning it after all. Suddenly a dog's shrill, vibrating howl comes from the farthest end of the settlement. It has an electrifying effect; they all stand still, sniff at the breeze, give little whines, cautiously, tentatively, trying for the right note—and then the whole choir sit back on their haunches, lift their noses high in the air towards the bright sun and utter a long, long howl—a thousand dogs at once. This is *their* greeting to summer.

Down by the shore of the lagoon lie silent, serious men skilfully hidden behind high butts of turf, on the look-out for wild ducks and geese; out of the blue sea the kayaks hurry to and fro apparently without aim or object, but their owners, the sturdy hunters, are after seal or walrus. An umiak—the skin-boat of the Eskimos—comes heading round the outermost point, blown onwards over the sea by the gentle summer breeze, under a huge press of sail; and farthest out, where sea and sky meet, glitters the ice: huge floes, lofty hummocks, caved out and blue.

A woman is scanning the sea, shading her eyes from the sun with her hand and fixing them eagerly on a kayak which has suddenly shot off, intent on its object. She sees the man in it lift his arm—a rapid forward motion—a spear glances—a splash in front of the bow; the seal

is hit! Other kayaks hurry to the spot; spear after spear is slung at the target; the unequal fight goes on, as the seal draws off with its intolerable burden—spears in its back, inflated skin-bladders astern—it tries to escape but is headed off everywhere by a kayak or a spear, becomes exhausted—dies.

She gives a shout and work stops at once; women and children run up, look out to sea with keen experienced eyes—aha! a seal, an uglug; now there will be great times!

Soon the fire is blazing in the open. Women come dragging great cauldrons, others bring water and it is put to boil over the fire. More wood is thrown on, everything is got ready; but out at sea the hunters are struggling to reach land with their great prize, led by the man who first planted his spear in the uglug's back. It takes a long time but at last they get there, a line is thrown ashore and the women do the hauling.

With shouts and screams and much jubilation the huge seal is dragged on to the beach, flayed, cut up, stuffed into the cauldrons, and ere long a great shout resounds through the settlement: the uglug is cooked!

Men leave their butts, women their skins, children their play; all hasten towards the fire, towards the steaming uglug-meat. There is

Frozen Justice

5

plenty for all comers: their eyes glitter, their mouths are full, it is a grand thing to live.

Silently they sit around the smouldering embers, belching loudly, full and contented, meditating upon nothing whatever. But there is merry-making in the air: one of the men tries the chances of starting a dance by lightly strumming with his fingers on the taut skin of a drum—the women sway in time, the men nod, more drums appear, the dance begins—the wild hula-hula. They laugh, dance, shout with joy; the bonfires blaze up again in the light night, the smoke rising into the sky in light, bluish clouds—all is mirth and laughter and joy, and up the slope to the soft moss-covered ground above go man and woman, hand in hand. . . .

It is midsummer at Nuwuk, but winter will soon be there.

Gone are the tents, put away till next spring; gone are the houses, buried in snow, invisible—yet no, not entirely, for their place is marked by two holes, one where the smoke finds its way into the open air, another over the bladder-parchment window, through which a faint glow shines out into the dark polar night.

Only the platforms are to be seen, emptied of all their stores. The food is eaten, the oil burnt, the skins used up—the summer's supplies are

6 Frozen Justice

finished, the village is on short commons, for the sea is closed, covered by ice.

Inside the huts sit men, women and children, squatting on floor and sleeping-bench. They are silent, gazing before them with dull, listless eyes, and their hands lie in their lap—*his* spear and hunting gear are all in order, he is only waiting for open water, game—*her* skins are all tanned, made into clothes, she has not much to do except the cooking—but the sea is closed, covered by ice, so there is nothing to cook.

The children are thin, emaciated; their cheekbones stand out, their eyes are sunk in their heads; they whimper, want food, and don't understand why there is none.

The man is uneasy, there is a tingling in his blood—he longs to be darting in his light kayak across open water, after seal, after food; but he must wait—it is dark outside and the water is gone; there is ice everywhere.

The children's whimperings grow louder, they cry out for food; it is more than their parents can bear. They exchange glances, hers questioning, beseeching; his gloomy and serious—then he nods resignedly, gets up, slips his anorak over his head, takes a spear and goes out.

The children sit still, full of expectation; they know what it means. The soft footfalls lose themselves in the snow—all is quiet and still in-

side the little hut—they are all listening. Then they hear a terrified yelp, a howl, a gurgling sound—the footsteps return towards the house, and the man crawls in through the narrow opening, dragging a load behind him, shakes the snow off his clothing, and without a word throws a slaughtered dog across to the woman. The little ones brighten up; their eyes glitter at the sight of the raw meat which appears under their mother's deft fingers. Soon the dog is flayed, cut into pieces, and some of it is in the pot—only a little, for they must save, but better half a loaf than no bread.

It is midwinter at Nuwuk, but after winter comes spring.

Sunlight is blazing over the ice, making the ice-crystals flash and glitter; spring has come and with it the seal. Once more there is food, and big splashes of blood outside the huts show where the seals have been flayed. Men, women and children have filled out their hollow cheeks, their walk has become springy, their eyes are bright; they breathe freely again after the long, cramped winter.

Deep sledge-tracks lead down from the huts to the edge of the ice and far out over the sea —out to busy men who move like small black dots out there among the hummocky ice, waging their victorious warfare with the beasts of the

8 Frozen Justice

sea. Day after day the dogs in full cry tow fresh-killed seals home to the beach, along a track stained red with blood, home to the women, who flay and flense the juicy flesh.

Children walk around, warmly clad in thick reindeer-skin clothes, munching meat, raw or boiled as it may chance, and the dogs are busy, they have not yet forgotten the bitter winter and they bury lumps of meat under the snow—a precaution against evil days.

Yes, it is spring at Nuwuk, and soon will come the whale!

The whale—the great Bowhead, the Eskimo's biggest game; the sea's—nay, the world's mightiest beast. They hope to catch many: whales give food, blubber and oil, but best of all they give whalebone for trading with the white man, who comes when the sea opens, in great ships laden with the most glorious things, much coveted by the skin-clad folk away up in the north.

Many whales give much whalebone—much whalebone provides things otherwise unobtainable: flour and treacle, weapons for men and trinkets for women, spirits for every one—yes, they hope for many whales!

Preparations for the hunt are in hand, there is lots of work to be done, sledges to be overhauled and lashings renewed, umiaks to be fitted

out, cracked timber to be replaced; and the women are busy with needle and thread and large hides—the coverings are being overhauled.

But first and foremost the men work at their weapons—spears, lances and great knives—all must be in perfect order, for a faulty weapon may mean the loss of a whale.

Ay, they work with a will in the golden spring sunshine up at Nuwuk—when the whale is on the way!

They scan the ice-bound ocean, stiff, white, white as chalk, that stretches from the beach right away to the horizon; white everywhere, no dark-blue patches—of water—are yet to be seen.

Anxiously they scan the icy ocean. The ice has not yet drifted away—it is late in the spring, there should have been open water long ago, but persistent westerly winds hold up the ice against the land.

Everything was ready. A road had been cleared, out between the great ice-hummocks; the umiaks were lashed on to the sledges, driven up alongside each other full of weapons, bladders and all the other gear; the harness lay on the sledges and the dogs were tied in long rows; everything was ready to start away across the ice to the open water, to the glorious, thrilling fight with the north-bound whale.

10 Frozen Justice

Out on the ice, far from land, where the water ought to come, sat a number of men under the lee of a lofty hummock.

Above them howled the gale, the everlasting westerly wind. It drove the snow over the ice, whirled it up, whipped it round, drove it eastwards in to the land. The snow flew along at a furious pace, rising in clouds from the tops of the hummocks, and everything living sought shelter—all save the group of men who sat warm and comfortable behind the blocks of ice, with their knees drawn up under the anorak, head hidden in its hood, and back to the wind and the whirling snow.

They sat in silence looking towards the east—watching a tall man dressed in furs which fitted closely to his lithe figure. Long hairs from the hood of his anorak blew across his face, but could not altogether hide his dark, vivacious eyes nor his clear-cut nose and firm mouth—still less the large stone plates stuck on his cheeks and held in place by a small plate thrust through a hole in the cheek.

He held a drum in his hand, and as he paced backwards and forwards before the assembled men he beat it and shouted words into the gale, which whirled them eastwards. At first they were gentle, supplicating words, and the drum

Frozen Justice 11

seemed to be beseeching too, quietly and with a gurgling sound; his eyes were mild, his gestures prayerful, as he stretched his arms towards the east and touched the edge of his drum—a prayer for an easterly wind.

His arm dropped—he stood still for a moment; then he played up again on his drum, a tripping, joyous rhythm; his eyes shone, his feet danced and his body swayed from side to side; he was inviting the east wind to a feast, a banquet of whale.

But there were enemies at the feast and they had to be driven out. His playing became defiant, hard—his eyes flashed lightning, his antics became threatening and wild; then he swung round, in the teeth of the snowstorm and the cutting wind. His hood blew off his head and the long black hair whipped his face. The wind did its best to subdue the strong man; it tore at his body, which swayed backwards and forwards; but ever the drum spoke louder, disdainful, defiant, imperious, and louder still came his words, almost in a scream: “West wind, I bid thee go!”

The group behind him hummed in chorus—gently praying or loudly commanding, according to his lead, and when he hurled his scorn and anger at the west wind, all the fur-clad men leapt

to their feet; they turned to the west, to the wind and the snowstorm and shouted an echo:—"West wind, dost thou hear? he bids thee go!"

Then they sat down, and the tall man standing alone turned again to the east with the same prayer—imploring the east wind to come and give them open water before it was too late.

The prayer was ended, the last effort made to summon the east wind, his drum gave a final, expiring supplication; then without turning round he walked landwards, followed by his men.

This was Nuwuk's uncrowned king, the best hunter, son and grandson of the best hunters of former generations—Sakhawachiak, leader of the hunt, owner of five umiaks, the cleverest business head in the settlement.

On the beach the men were met by women and children, but one woman stood apart on a block of ice, scorning the gale. Her eyes shone, her cheeks were aglow, her lips parted in a smile—she clapped her hands and almost cried aloud for joy as she leapt down from the ice-block and went to meet the men—no, the man. . . . "Sakhawachiak, now the east wind will come!"

His hard features relaxed, his eyes smiled at Nuwuk's loveliest woman: "Igluruk, you're catching cold, go home!"

Hand in hand they went up towards the huts, followed by all the rest; and soon they were

sitting cosy and warm indoors, listening to the westerly gale as it tore over the settlement with deep growls and shrill wails, for the west wind was still master and still sent cascades of whirling snow over the huts of Nuwuk in a wild dance of death. They had tried all they knew to drive it away, nothing had been left undone; the ange-kok—the village sorcerer—had been at work early and late with sacrifices and spells, howls and wild antics, all in vain; but now—ah, now the east wind was sure to come, for Sakhawachiak had bidden it to a feast.

And one morning there was a shout—“The east wind has come!” It was repeated from hut to hut, the whole length of the settlement, and people came streaming out—up on to the highest ground, where they collected, looking westward, out across the ice-bound sea.

“Oh look—there, there!”—a streak of blue broke the monotonous white; it stretched from north to south as far as the eye could see, all the way along the coast. The sun glittered upon little frolicsome waves; sea mists, stained golden by the sun, rose over the water into the cold air and floated away before the gentle breeze; the sea had come to life—birds flew to and fro with strong, free swoops and the seal gambolled joyfully in the open water. The prayer had been heard: the east wind was there, setting the ice

off the coast—now the hunting season was in at Nuwuk, the coast water had come.

Whaling was in full swing. Out by the open coast water the umiaks stood on their sledges—no longer lashed down, but ready for instant use. The paddles, the short oars, were in place; the harpoons and spears lay in the bow, points forward, ready to be seized by strong arms and driven deep into the whale's quivering back. The lines were coiled in big fakes, ready to run out at any moment; the bladders were inflated, and the crew lay asleep in the bottom of the umiak—at a word they would spring up and run the boat out, equipped and manned for the fray.

Solitary men kept watch from high ice-hummocks close to the umiaks. They strained their eyes towards the south, on the look-out for a whale or a signal from the next watchman, who showed up in the distance sharply outlined against the clear spring sky.

Women are there too, but superstition forbids any woman to be present when the whale is harpooned—they would frighten it away. So they are only there as visitors—yet not entirely so, for they see to the men's wants in the way of food and drink and mend the skins of the umiaks.

And so the women move backwards and forwards between the land and the edge of the ice

with its hungry and thirsty men; some of them carry out boiled meat, others go with bladders slung on back and chest, filled with ice that melts to water with the heat of the body—ready to relieve the cravings of the thirsty. Others sit busily occupied with needle and thread, repairing clothes and skins; all are at work, all have something to do—only one is free, only a single one of all the women in the settlement goes about without any special task. Beautiful she is to look upon, and her slender body is clad in costly furs; but then she is only for the eye, not for work—she has never learnt it and will not learn it now. She is Igluruk—Sakhawachiak's woman, the loveliest on the whole coast, envied by her sex—and much despised; desired by men, but belonging only to one—Sakhawachiak, who from the time she was a child chose her for his mate.

Her complexion is fair and her eyes not so brown as most Eskimo eyes; her face is oval and does not show the prominent cheek-bones, usually so noticeable in all Eskimos; she is supple and finely built, with springy step, not dragging and heavy from much toil; in truth she is as beautiful and delicate as any woman, even outside the land of the Eskimos—but then her father was a white man.

In form and appearance she is a fitting mate

16 Frozen Justice

for the splendid Sakhawachiak, but there the resemblance ends—he is first at work, in the chase, in every manly exercise—she comes last, can do nothing, is only a beautiful picture.

But he, Sakhawachiak, the chief, the natural leader, who is now standing on the ice-hummock, sharply outlined against the brilliant sun—he is fond of her and treats her as no other woman is treated in all Nuwuk; he adores her and allows her to do as she pleases, lets her off all a woman's heavy duties and gets others to do her share; nothing is too good for Igluruk, all she desires is hers.

And as he stands up there on the hummock his interest is divided between Igluruk and keeping a look-out for whale. He looks at her and then across the open water, cheerful, happy, contented, with her image before his eyes.

But what's that? He starts, his eyes turn southward, away from Igluruk—yes, there's no mistake—a jet of vapour rises from the sea: it's a whale—it spouts!

In a second he is transformed; his eyes shine, he straightens himself up. There, there, it spouts again! He swings round with a low-voiced order: “Run off, you women; good-bye, Igluruk”—and then runs with noiseless feet to the umiaks: “Hush, wake up, there's whale!”

Up jump the sleepers, wide awake, fully

equipped. They thrust their shoulders to the umiaks, which glide slowly into the water, jump into them, grasp the paddles, and away. But high up in the bow of the foremost one stands Sakhawachiak, still as a statue with the harpoon raised aloft, ready to plunge the deadly weapon up to the shaft in the whale's back.

The whale comes on lazily, disporting itself in the water, its back shining black and glossy, while every now and then it sends up a jet of water and vapour; then it dives for a while, comes up again for breath—coming steadily nearer, with no idea of danger.

The whale has passed the umiak . . . now then—row, paddle for all you're worth! White foam scatters from the bow, and the umiak flies over the sea propelled by eight muscular men; the sweat pours off them, every nerve is tense. But in the bow stands Sakhawachiak with feet set far apart, one a little forward of the other. He holds the harpoon with both hands high above his head and sways his shoulders, testing his balance and measuring with the eye his distance from the black monster.

The oarsmen hold their breath—not a sound is heard but the foaming of the water at the bow. They are gaining on the whale, as the huge and mighty beast, strong as the very forces of Nature, swims on secure in the consciousness of its power.

But a few seconds more and it suspects the danger—the big body gives a jerk, the tail moves restlessly, the head turns a little from side to side. Soon it will see the umiak and dive—or attack, if by then the harpoon has not buried itself deep in the Whale's flesh. But it is too soon yet to hurl the deadly weapon: the vulnerable spot is still out of the range from the umiak—wait a second or two.

Sakhawachiak stands in the bow, calm as before, merely signalling to the rowers with nods of the head—"Straight ahead!"—"Put on speed!"—and the umiak shoots forward through the seething water, aiming obliquely for the whale's neck from astern.

Ten fathoms, five fathoms, only two fathoms from the whale—the nodding head steadies with a jerk and Sakhawachiak bends his body back. Then he throws himself forward and the harpoon flies to the mark, propelled by his strength, its own weight, and the umiak's foaming onrush—straight to the neck of the whale.

The silence is broken—"Back water!"—for now they are right upon the monster. The paddles grip the water, which foams around them, and the umiak loses its way with its bow well overlapping the whale's back, amid a rush of surf like that on a storm-swept coast. The umiak drops astern, away from this dangerous prox-

imity, but not before Sakhawachiak has plunged a couple more harpoons in the back of the wounded whale, which in its terror beats the water to a froth with its tail.

"Back water—away from the whale!"—now they can see its eye, small, red and evil; then it raises its forepart—"Look out, it's diving!"—slowly the head sinks—the back is arched, the water surges about the whale—then the tail comes up, high in the air, higher still, and lashes all round in the air. One blow means death.

But its adversaries are cool, experienced men; eight pairs of eyes are watching the whale's least movement, the umiak backs away in safety, and then the whale dives—in surf and blood-stained foam the mighty beast disappears with three harpoons in its back.

The two forward rowers drop their paddles and come to the aid of Sakhawachiak. And he needs it, for the whale tugs at the lines with a force of a hundred tons; they are stretched thin—thinner still—to breaking-point—the wood-work smokes as they run out over the bow. One line is thrown overboard with an inflated bladder at the end of it, then another, then the last—the umiak is released from the whale.

More umiaks come up, all are in the neighbourhood; at least twenty boats pursue the wounded whale. They dash along, side by side, propelled

by shouting, howling men, but each has a cool, calm man in the bow, ready to send the harpoon home to its mark.

The lines slacken, up comes the whale, breaking the surface with a mighty splash. It sees the umiaks all around, takes fright, lifts its tail to strike and lashes the water into foam—but fails to reach the boats. Then it dives again, with more harpoons quivering in its back; lines run out, bladders are thrown overboard, paddles flash in the sun, the water churns round the umiak—“Keep near the whale!”

For an hour the battle goes on. Then the whale dives no more—it is too tired. It chases the umiaks through water that is turbid and greasy with blood and oil from the animal’s body; it lashes the sea into foam with its tail—but the umiaks are manned by crews that know the danger and despise it; they row, backwater and row again, right through the surf, close to the whale; blood and spray dash over the boat and its crew, as they plunge harpoon after harpoon into the animal’s back.

The whale is exhausted, gives up the fight, but is still alive. Slowly it swims about, blood pouring from it in streams; its eyes are blinded by the bloody water. Its mouth opens and shuts, the water is expelled through the whalebone with a whistling sound; it still spouts—but blood. And

round about the Eskimos rest quietly in the umiaks, for the whale is nearly dead and can now do no harm.

Great flocks of birds come flying from north and south, east and west; screaming they alight on the back of the still living beast and fight over its congealing blood; screaming the whole swarm flies up into the air when the whale's body quivers in its death-struggle; the sun is eclipsed by them, but as soon as the whale is still again they settle on it once more.

An hour or two have gone by and still the whale is not dead, but its movements are feeble; only occasionally does it manage to raise its tail out of the water—then it makes a last, a desperate effort to escape from its persecutors: it attempts to dive but has not the strength; then it rolls over on its back and exposes its light coloured belly. And away on the beach and from all the umiaks rises a shout of joy—“The whale is dead!”

Then the women come down. They run, they jump along the track out to the open water, children running with them, dogs too, and last of all come the old, worn-out ones, those who in bygone years stood in the bow of the umiak and dealt the death-blow, or were first in the women's race. All that can creep or walk hurry out to the open water, with screams and laughter and loud cries of joy, mad with delight.

On the sea they are hard at it. A score or more of umiaks tow the defeated giant towards land at a funereal pace; they toil and moil at the paddles, but they do make headway, up to the edge of the ice, where busy hands make fast the carcase.

And then they feed—for the winter was long and hard, and the winter is coming again—so they settle down to a feast out there on the ice, by the open water, alongside the dead whale.

It is more than a feast, it is an orgy of food. All who have hands and can use a knife carve big lumps of mugtuk from the whale, stuff them in their mouths and cut again. Blood and oil drip from the corners of their mouths on to their clothing; and when their stomachs are full they lie down to sleep beside the whale, happy, satisfied and dreaming glorious dreams of mountains of meat—dreams that materialize as soon as their eyes open—for the whale is there, one can feed again, feed till one can eat no more.

Provident men and women stand up on the whale with huge knives and hack at the carcase, flaying blubber and meat off it; they pile it on sledges and get it driven to land by dogs so gorged that they can scarcely walk.

There is a smell of blood and oil and sweat, blood running everywhere; the snow is soaked with blood, the Eskimos' clothes are caked with it

Frozen Justice 23

in thick, thick layers; they have blood on their hair, blood on their faces, blood on hands and arms; the dogs have rolled in blood, which congeals, till their coats stick out round them in bloody tufts. The sledges run with blood and oil; the sea is dead, its waves subdued in fat—and up in the air are thousands of gulls, blood-stained like everything below, so full that they vomit as they fly.

Heigh-ho! there is feasting at Nuwuk when the east wind is master—bidden to a banquet by Sakhawachiak.

More whales are taken. Meat is heaped ashore in great piles, blubber in others; but high on the platform lies the precious whalebone, washed, dried and tied in bundles, awaiting a ship. It is early summer at Nuwuk—soon the ships will come, and with them life and jollity.

II

THE whaling was over. The whale still swam in the sea off Nuwuk, but so far out that the Eskimos could not reach it in their frail umiaks, and so it was preserved for the time being; the mortal combat would not begin again until the whaling fleet arrived.

So there was peace at sea and peace on land; the Eskimos were waiting for the ships.

The sun poured down its rays upon the low shore and baked it warm; it called to life the plant world after its long winter sleep, green things appeared, and buds, in a night the flowers came out—yellow anemones turned their shining heads to the sun, little red flowers burst out in every crack and cranny where they could find shelter, blue harebells nodded their pretty heads in the gentle summer breeze, and underfoot was a carpet of juicy green moss, well-nigh hidden by delicate pink flowers.

In the pools wild duck swam about, mirrored in the bright water; overhead flight after flight of migrating birds passed on their endless journeys—flapping and cackling they disappeared to

the northward bound for lands that men have never yet seen, the preserves where they breed. Wild swans came sweeping down and dashed with hoarse cries upon the bright surface of the lagoon; a cascade of spray surrounded them, and ring after ring ran out, settled down, vanished and the lagoon lay once more bright, smooth and blue, bearing on its surface the wanton swans of springtime.

And out at sea, wherever one might look, over the flat green land and the white shore, gulls were soaring in their light and graceful flight. They hovered for a second, on the look-out for small fish, then discovered something eatable, folded their wings and dived headlong into the sea; came up with the fish in their beak—and then the whole screaming choir flew off in pursuit of the lucky one, who struggled to swallow his prey as he flew. Not till it had been devoured by the fortunate fisher or by a bold robber was peace restored—a peace befitting the grandeur of the scene.

The ocean lay calm, smooth, bright as a mirror, deep blue; out at sea floated the white ice, stained almost pink by the low rays of the sun, while in the shadows it was blue, dark blue, almost blue-black, in sharp contrast with all the white and gold colouring.

And in the far distance, where sky and sea met,

26 Frozen Justice

the fata morgana sported in its fantastic show, building castles with pinnacles sky-high, but finding them not beautiful enough, shattering them to fragments, and a moment after creating a long, jagged mountain range, on whose steep slopes it built up towers—an endless, restless game.

The Eskimos wandered about looking at all the greenness, at the flowers, yellow, red and blue; they followed with their eyes the hosts of birds rushing northward and they saw the swans on the waters of the lagoon; they saw the gulls, the bright sea and the lovely colours on the ice; their eyes followed the play of the mirage, they saw it but did not take it in, for their whole interest was concentrated on the southern horizon; *that* was the object of their gaze, as the open coast water was before. They waited in longing, now as in early spring; there was longing in their eyes, in every feature, in the hearts of all the watching men and women, who were looking out to the southward from the highest point inland, towards the spot where the first mast, the first smoke would appear.

They talked together, wondering whether the white men's magic would be able to keep its strength year after year, whether the white men's great God would have the power time after time to lift the ships up over the horizon; whether—

like their own gods—he would not grow tired of his arts and give up—and what then? Awful thought; without him the ships would not be able to make their way to Nuwuk through its barriers of ice.

But listen! One day a shout of joy calls everybody from tents, from hunting or from work. They rush up, big and small, old and young, up to the highest ground, to the only hill in Nuwuk, where a whole row of Eskimos is already standing, shading their eyes with their hands and all turned to the south, while the murmur of their voices reaches those who are running up, who pick up the rhythm and help to swell it into a loud, clear cry: “Umiakpok kaili—the ships are coming!”

Umiakpok kaili!—how much that joyful shout means to the hundreds collected there! It is a song of gladness, a hymn in praise of the world’s strongest, of the white man, who every autumn sinks below the southern horizon with his ship, laden with whalebone and oil, to come up again when the sun is at midsummer, with the oil and whalebone transformed into flour, sugar, clothes and—spirits.

Clever white man, great white man, inimitable white man, how do you do it? What magic did you receive as your birthright? Teach it me, let me share your wisdom; I long to learn.

28 Frozen Justice

Thus thought the angekok of Nuwuk, the dreaded Uyarak, to whom even Sakhawachiak had often to give way.

He was sitting a little apart from the other Eskimos on a large stone, bowed down, with his aged wrinkled face buried in both hands, while his keen, sparkling eyes followed the gradual raising of the ships above the horizon.

He had tried to persuade the white man to teach him the art. He had offered more than one skipper lots of bundles of whalebone, beautiful skins, splendid made-up furs—but all to no purpose; they simply laughed at him when he asked them to teach him the art of raising even the smallest stone without pulling it by a string. They couldn't do that, they said, laughing. Old swindler, how do you think you can get a stone up to the roof of that iglo without pulling it up?

Many a time he had explained to the white men that he would keep it to himself if they would only show him the trick; hidden arts were just his means of livelihood and he had offered to teach them all he knew in exchange; but they laughed at him—impossible, old fellow; we can't make a stone fly!

And yet time after time he had seen the opposite. How often had he seen, as he saw now, the tip of a mast appearing above the horizon,

then more and more, yards, funnel, the whole hull lifted up . . . well, well, perhaps the white men would not teach an Eskimo all their magic, one could understand that; but it was a lie all the same when they said they couldn't. That story about the world being round was all nonsense; anybody with eyes in his head could see it was flat.

Thus thought the wise man, as he watched the ships drawing nearer and wondered what sort of a person it was that lay on the edge of the earth and lifted them up. . . . But round about him the other Eskimos shouted for joy: *they* had nothing to do with supernatural powers, *they* took things as they came, and down there to the south came the ships they had waited and longed for. Louder and louder they shouted and yelled: "Umiakpok, umiakpok kaili!" . . . The great event of the summer was at hand; the ships were coming, and with them the white men's food, the white men's weapons, the white men's wonderful liquids which made men happy, women accommodating, and which in a short time chased away even the heaviest sorrows.

Slowly the fleet came nearer. There were steamers, fully rigged, and there were sailing ships, big and small—old barques lurching heavily and unhandily over the water, light schooners with

30 Frozen Justice

high slender rig, supporting their lofty, soaring sails, and even a sloop there was—the light forces of the fleet.

They worked their way northward, up towards Nuwuk, where the whole settlement was seething with excitement. Men and women ran up and down the beach dressed in their best furs; the men's with little tails hanging down the back, the women's embroidered with bits of dyed skin. With feverish haste umiaks and kayaks were made ready for launching—the fleet must be received in befitting manner.

At last it was near. The heavy throb of the engines was clearly audible on land, blocks and ropes creaked and grated, orders were flung out by deep manly voices, repeated by others, answered—the fleet steered into the anchorage and made its way through all the light kayaks which bustled to and fro, while their owners shouted, laughed, gesticulated—and nearer the shore lay all the umiaks, with women at the paddles and a discreet old man at the helm—for some one must keep order, the women get wild when the summer festival starts.

There was a jangle of ships' telegraphs, sails were furled, one heavy sail after another came whizzing down with a creak and a crash; shouts, screams, curses—there was a noise as if all the evil spirits had been let loose in quiet Nuwuk.

The ripple under the iron-cased stem grew less and less, the ship slowed down, and then a harsh voice rose above the din: "Let go the anchor!"—another answered: "Let go!"—and with a mighty splash and rattling of chains, with a cloud of rust rising from the hawse-hole, the first anchor dropped. The chain tautened, the vessel swung—and lay motionless. Other vessels came into the anchorage; time after time the sharp order "Let go!" was heard, and with much yelling and shouting the fleet gradually came to rest. The end of the voyage was reached—there lay Nuwuk, bathed in sunlight, deserted, four hundred yards away.

But out in the roadstead, where the ships now lay side by side, a frightful hooting was going on—all the sirens were shrilling, wide open, lashed fast; the sailing vessels were sounding their foghorns, and some of the ships were firing canons—all signs of rejoicing at the happy conclusion of the perilous ice-navigation and intended to show that they felt at home.

The noise died away. Willing hands furled the stiff sails; yards were braced square, boats manned and cast off; and with the harpooner in the stern steering the sharp-lined whale-boat with a long oar, with the skipper on the stern thwart and six active men to row, the light craft shot towards land—where the kayaks were steering al-

32 Frozen Justice

ready, where the women's boats lay, and where the population of Nuwuk was assembled.

There are lively times here in the world's northernmost market when the advanced guard of civilization comes in contact with the natives; but today is given up to friendship and not to business—it is a day for looking up old acquaintances.

Weatherbeaten, broad-shouldered seamen with long hair and beards stroll around looking about them. They nod to all the natives they meet, say a word or two to the men and chuck the women playfully under the chin; they stick their heads without ceremony into the tents and calmly roll in among the Eskimo crowd, where they make no bones about cuddling the only too willing Eskimo girls. What does it matter?—it's only the white man's right when he mixes with the natives.

Things get lively ashore; the white man's wonder-working liquor is already beginning to take effect. The strangers stand treat without stint, and the Eskimos accept greedily, both men and women, even children get a drop; so it is not very long before all restraint is thrown off and the light polar night is witness to the wildest orgies.

There are quarrels and fights; old, long-forgotten bones of contention are dug up again. One maddened Eskimo tears up and down with blood-shot eyes—he has a spear in his hand and is

hunting for a man who is his daily chum, but who once, a long, long time ago, insulted him. They meet, the spear flies through the air—yes, it's a dangerous thing to be about in Nuwuk when the drink has got in—it draws blood.

The white seamen fight among themselves or with the Eskimos—with injured husbands whose women have been too obliging or have been unable to withstand the white men's presents. Hell is loose in peaceable Nuwuk—the natives are transformed; but at last the din dies down: men and women, stupefied with whisky, lie stretched on the soft mossy carpet, sleeping heavily and uneasily—the drunkard's sleep. And from the ships, riding peacefully at anchor, come hoarse cries, now and then the sound of a shot—it is an old custom to celebrate the arrival at Nuwuk with drink and riot. For twenty-four hours the whaler's iron discipline is relaxed; and next day one or other oblong bundle of sailcloth is slipped into the sea, while every ship's flag is half-masted and the yards hang as best they can—whisky has claimed its victims among the rag-tag and bob-tail of the whaling fleet.

But scarcely has the last splash died away before the flags are run up—now, look alive there! brace the yards square! the spree's over, work is starting again.

For a week the whaling fleet lay off Nuwuk while trading went on ashore. Boat after boat rowed in from the ships, and willing hands landed great bales of cloth, costly sacks of flour, weapons, beads, mirrors and many other things, bringing them to the skippers, each of whom, assisted by a couple of mates, was bargaining and chaffering with half a hundred natives.

This is a slow way of doing business, for everybody has to put his oar in even if he has no share in the bargain, but it gets done somehow, and boats row back to the ships, filled to the gunwale with whalebone, oil and bundles of skins.

Sakhawachiak sat far from the others, alone; only Igluruk was with him, and some half-score of whites. He was doing business too, but in a more rational way; his forehead was wrinkled and he was sweating from the unaccustomed labour—of thinking; but there was no help for it, since he had far the biggest stock of whalebone and skins and had to keep his wits about him. He would have to support some fifty men during the coming year; he had to buy goods to barter with the natives when the whalers were gone. Nothing must be forgotten, for when the ships left Nuwuk it would be another year before the white man's wonders could be had again.

Bundle after bundle of whalebone and skins changed hands, while behind Sakhawachiak rose

piles of flour and sugar, ship's biscuits, cloth, knives, saws, weapons, gaudy beads, looking-glasses—even an accordion lay among the heap, which contained everything an Eskimo could desire. And every time trading seemed to be finished, more skins and more whalebone arrived, until at last Sakhawachiak had exhausted his stock; then he got up, nodded to the assembled seamen, and went up to his tent accompanied by Igluruk—business was over. Ten or a dozen skippers and mates were left sitting on the beach, looking at each other in silence. Then one of them got up slowly and stretched himself—a hell of a fellow, that Sakhawachiak, he gets more difficult to deal with every year. Look at his stacks of whalebone! what sense is there in a native making all that money?

Everybody is tired, worn out by all the trading, drinking and debauchery and quite glad there is nothing left to trade with. Tomorrow the fleet will go whaling, right out to the pack-ice, which in good summers can just be seen above the horizon; but before that there is to be a feast on board. All the inhabitants of Nuwuk are invited to a festive evening, both men and women—especially the latter.

It is a wild night afloat, with drinking going on till morning. Families get split up; men can't find their women, mothers can't find their chil-

dren; the ships are full of shouts and shrieks—the advance guard of civilization is giving the natives a lesson in white men's manners and morals. Wild orgies go on in cabin and fo'c'stle—sailors are a bad lot, but whalers are worse, the very worst scourings; almost all of them poor devils who have been shanghaied—wake up one fine morning in a stinking whaler's fo'c'stle with a splitting headache—wake up to life so hard, so coarse and so brutal that many of them jump overboard before the cruise is at end. And by now they have been tyrannized over so long that they enjoy being able to tyrannize over others—they force struggling women to yield and fell protesting men to the deck.

The ships go whaling with Nuwuk as their station. They cruise up and down the pack-ice with a look-out at every masthead, whence keen-sighted men incessantly sweep the sea with their eyes; and woe to the whale that comes within their view. "She spouts!"—that is the signal for the hunt to begin; the skipper goes aloft, boats are swung out level with the rail, the engines are stopped, and under sail only the vessel manœuvres towards the unsuspecting whale. An order is shouted from the masthead: "Lower away!"—six boats take the water simultaneously, and sheer off from the ship with the harpooner in the bow,

the coxswain in the sternsheets, and six men at the oars.

A new hand funks, then jumps—too late, and falls between the ship's side and the boat. One second, and he'll be hauled up—but no; the whale can't be replaced but the man can—or anyhow he can be spared, so the boat sheers off. If his shipmates protest, they get no answer, or if they do, it is short, sharp and to the point: “Pull away there and hold your noise—there's no shortage of seamen.”

If the whale is taken, it is towed in to the coast, where several ships are always lying, their crews busily engaged in cutting off the huge beast's head, heaving it on board and cutting out the whalebone. Then the body is flayed, the blubber cut into pieces and stowed away in large tanks or barrels, and the carcase, weighing fifty tons or so, is set adrift; the ship is cleaned up, boats hoisted, the anchor weighed, and with a dip of the flag and a blast from the siren the vessel heads out to sea again in pursuit of the precious whale.

But summer is waning—it does not last long at Nuwuk. The sun is low in the sky and gives no more warmth; it no longer has the strength to thaw the big snowdrifts that cover the shore.

The ships still come in to the coast with whales

in tow, but they are coated with ice. There is ice on the ship's sides and the deck is buried under ice and blood; the rigging hangs heavy with rime, and every time the crew touch a rope, big icicles fall on deck with a crash. The sails are frozen stiff, and the crew are in low spirits; they are always cold, underfed, overworked, bullied night and day.

Voces are raised in protest, but the ship is full of officers aft—a handspike on the head is their cure for a bad temper—a shot if that doesn't work—and in the evening skipper and mate bend over the cabin table embellishing the log-book with such items as this:—"John Brown, A. B., died today after three days' acute pneumonia."

One day the ice set in towards land, autumn was beginning in earnest. One ship after another had left the whaling-grounds and headed southward to milder climes, but the rest of the fleet was still making a good catch and remained at Nuwuk until it was impossible to stay any longer.

One ship was crushed in the ice and her crew was distributed among the other vessels; but one fine morning the Eskimos awoke to see the steam-whaler *Bowhead* high and dry with her starboard side crushed. Jones, the skipper, was still drunk—so drunk that he stayed on the bridge navigating the ship; he shouted orders against the cutting wind, over his doomed vessel, and,

when he saw the hands at work, thought they were carrying out his commands, whereas they were only saving their own skins and leaving their skipper to his fate. He deserved it: three times the mate had warned him that the ice was moving landward, the fourth time he tried to shake some sense into the madman. . . . "What do you say, Mr. Moore, is the ice coming?—Well, let it come. . . . What's it got to do with me? I was here first!" . . . and then he shut himself in with his whisky keg while the vessel drove ashore and fortunes were lost.

Then it was time to get clear of the place if they were to save ships and freight. The *Bowhead's* crew was divided among the remaining ships, now much overmanned, and the fleet steered southward, disappearing in the driving snow.

Behind them in barren Nuwuk they left the Eskimos. Winter had begun and they were badly prepared for it. . . . Life with the whalers had left its traces—the last fumes of spirits had not yet evaporated, but there was worse, far worse than that: intercourse with the whalers had brought diseases upon men and women; diseases of which the natives had had some experience from previous visits but against which they had no remedy.

The ships were gone, autumn had set in, but they were no longer alone as before—three white

men had stayed behind in the settlement. Two of them were sailors who had deserted from the fleet and hidden ashore; but now they came out, certain that punishment could no longer reach them. Their names were Jim Hacklet and Joe—Black Joe his shipmates had called him—and Black Joe the Eskimos called him now.

The third man was of a type hitherto unknown to the Eskimos. He was white and spoke the white men's language, but there the resemblance ended. The others, the two from the whaling ships, cursed and swore, drank and fought—but he was quiet, went peaceably about and conversed with the natives. He sat among the groups of women and played with the children; he did not drink; on the contrary they had often heard him speak incomprehensible words to the half-drunk seamen and seen him stop them giving whisky to the Eskimos. He brought no diseases, but was often in the tents of the sick; he gave them medicine and tried to remedy his countrymen's misdeeds, and up and down the coast the natives talked about the quiet white man. Their tongues could scarcely manage his difficult name—"Missionary" they called him and thought that was his name, and it was not till long afterwards that they learnt what he was really called—Hastings, christian name Edward, Nuwuk's first missionary.

And peace sank down upon the settlement,

while the sun continually waned. The Eskimos—all except the sick ones—had nearly forgotten the dissipations of the summer and believed that everything would go on just the same as in former years, but they were mistaken. Civilization had made its entry into Nuwuk; its pioneers were planted there; a new era was about to open.

Out of the wreck of the *Bowhead* Jim Hacklet and Black Joe had built themselves a house, and far from them Mr. Hastings lived in Sakhawachiak's iglo.

III

DISCORD arose in Nuwuk when the white men settled there, and the trouble began as soon as the whalers had left the station and Jim Hacklet and Black Joe came out of hiding.

Formerly stranded goods had been every man's property, and the Eskimos had rejoiced in anticipation when the *Bowhead* was driven ashore, crushed in the giant arms of the ice. For there were provisions on board in enormous quantities, there were ropes enough for the most lavish needs of the settlement, there were sails that would make fine big tents, arms and ammunition beyond the most sanguine expectations, there was timber—in fact, all that could be wished for, even goods for trading with, such as enterprising travellers could barter for whalebone and skins from distant places.

So there was plenty to help one's self to, and after the men of the settlement had helped the two runaway sailors to build a hut, they toiled for weeks together—assisted by women and children—at salving as much as possible of the late *Bowhead* and her marvels.

Frozen Justice 43

One night the ice packed suddenly round Nuwuk, and when the sun rose the *Bowhead* had vanished, smashed to bits or carried away by the ice; nobody knew or cared which, for on the beach lay more goods and gear than had ever been seen there before—now it would be divided, and they could look forward to the hard winter without fear of hunger or want.

But then discord began in peaceful Nuwuk, and it was the white men who started it.

It was a fine autumn morning—perfectly still and clear—cold, of course, but the people of Nuwuk did not mind that; they were all up with the first rays of the sun—all in a hurry to get down to the shore, to the immense quantities of goods piled up there—now they would get the reward for all their work.

But Jim Hacklet and Black Joe were there before the first of them. When all the inhabitants were assembled, and according to ancient and time-honoured custom Sakhawachiak—like his father and grandfather before him—stepped up to the piles to distribute their contents, the two white worthies barred his way. “Sakhawachiak, my friend, what do *you* want here?” Jim laughed at him, with a look in his eyes that spelt mischief.

“To take what is mine and give the others the rest,” was Sakhawachiak’s gentle reply; “that is

44 Frozen Justice

our way here; that is what we have always done and will do again, but you two strangers and Mr. Hastings shall have your share. That is the custom of Nuwuk."

But Jim laughed and Black Joe laughed with him. "Look at this nigger! Does he think he's going to teach us what to do with salvaged goods? No, my friend, nothing doing; that's not the white man's custom. The goods are ours."

The Eskimos made a great noise, shouted, threatened, begged, but none of it was any good. The white men had their own law, which was easy to understand, even for the natives, being quite free of all beating about the bush—and the law, as interpreted by the two worthies was briefly this: Once white man's property, always white man's property, so long as there are white men to claim it.

"See here, that's white man's law," the two declared; "so it is all over the world. So now you see that we have a right to all this here."

The Eskimos didn't quite see this and weapons came out. But Jim Hacklet and Black Joe had thought of that too. "This stuff's ours," they exclaimed; "touch it if you dare. The first man who comes forward will be shot."

And there ended the first dispute. The Eskimos withdrew and all the men assembled in the biggest iglo to talk things over. It sounded all

right, what the white men said; and yet the natives seemed to have a right to their share.

Sakhawachiak was brief. He did not know the white men's law, but still he had seen enough of the white men's ways to know that they were governed by other considerations than the natives of primitive Nuwuk. Let them keep it, was his advice; up to now we have kept on good terms with the whites, and perhaps they are right, those two down in the hut. We have managed before without stranded goods and wreckage; we shall manage all right again.

So the end of the palaver was that Black Joe and Jim Hacklet kept what the sea, the ice and Jones's drinking propensities had bestowed upon Nuwuk and its whole population; they had rejoiced over the gift, but relinquished it of their own free will rather than quarrel with the whites.

And winter came.

Again the Eskimos sat assembled in big iglos listening to the angekok's stories about all the strange things that happened in old days: about fearsome legendary creatures, about cruel punishments which befell men and women who transgressed the commandments of the community. They heard of the brother who long, long ago desired his sister, and as a punishment pursues her to this day, far from the first scene of his crime—now in the sky, as sun and moon, which eternally

46 Frozen Justice

fly and pursue each other, without ever getting nearer. The old women shook their heads, while the men nodded their full approval of the gods' punishment; but young eyes met and smiled—can the gods, can they really be so severe?

And the angekok told, in low and monotonous notes, the legends he had told a hundred times before. He told of robbery, rapine and murder, and of their punishments; he told of the dead who cry by night, and made his audience shudder; he told of the man in the moon and his wife, horrid folk, with a whole store of unborn children who can only be fetched from the moon by his aid—he told of many other things, of the northern lights, the glorious, ever restless, ever shifting lights of the Polar Night, now dim, now bright—how they are children at play, dead children amusing themselves at a game of ball; so that sorrowing parents might know that they were happy, when they could play like that.

And the natives listened; naked or half-naked they sat around the story-teller, while the train-oil lamps shed a sleepy light over the company, who, half asleep, took in almost unconsciously the monotonous sound of the angekok's voice. Suddenly they would sit up, their eyes awake and sparkling: "Begin again, Uyarak; begin again, you've forgotten something!"—for they had all heard the stories so often that they knew them by

heart; there was really no need for Uyarak to recount them, but of course it was his business, it was what he was there for—but then he must really take pains to stick to the story exactly as they had heard it when they themselves were tiny children and could just understand, and as they had heard it since, a hundred times or more.

In another hut sat Mr. Hastings; he was also telling stories, but to a smaller circle. He was telling of a Child who was called Jesus, and who, born of a woman, came to earth to save its people, who were sunk in ignorance and heathenism. He told of the white man's God, the great all-seeing, all-knowing, almighty Deity, to whom nothing is impossible—and the Eskimos listened, but they could not understand, could not make out how a being could see, know and hear everything not only at Nuwuk, but at Point Hope and far, far away, right into the land of the Kokmoliks. They thought it was impossible, nor could they understand how anything could look down at them through the earthen roof of the iglo—and certainly not how any one could know what people were thinking.

They couldn't take it in; they shook their heads. What kind of stories were these the man was telling? The like had never been heard at Nuwuk—surely they must be lies?

And Hastings went on. He told of a life after

48 Frozen Justice

death—inconceivable idea! Death was death, wasn't it?—then how could one come to life again? But here was this stranger talking about a new and better life than that we live on earth; about heaven, where all is bright and beautiful and where the good people go; and then about hell—chiefly about hell, where the wicked shall live a long time, an everlasting time, in heat, flames and eternal fire. They gave sly looks at one another and hugged themselves in pleasurable anticipation; it was so cold outside, the north wind was howling and the snow driving thick and fast—Mr. Hastings's hearers preferred the ever-warm hell to the good people's heaven: so why be good?

But Mr. Hastings kept on with his stories, repeating them again and again; he told beautiful tales about what he called pious men and women; he told about God and all that He has done, the story of the Creation, and much, much more. It all sounded so incredible, and the natives scarcely knew what to believe. For in other things Mr. Hastings was a man to be trusted; these were at any rate new stories, better than Uyarak's, and they drew. Night after night more and more Eskimos collected in Sakhawachiak's hut to listen to the missionary, and the fame of the new story-teller spread over Nuwuk and its neighbourhood.

He stormed against Uyarak and his faithful congregation; gave him the attributes of the Devil and warned all men to beware of him; he declared all the stories Uyarak told about old days and vengeance for crimes committed to be untrue and heathenish. No—Moses, a man who lived long, long ago, had talked with God and had received of Him knowledge of how men ought to live, what they should do and what they may not do. There were only ten commandments against Uyarak's hundreds of stories—transgress none of them and you are sure of heaven; yield to temptation and forget but one of these commandments and there was no escaping hell.

Thus spoke Mr. Hastings; they did not understand much to begin with, and now a good deal less. "Friend Hastings"—it was Sakhawachiak who asked—"do you never lie?"

"I? No, never."

Sakhawachiak pondered. . . . "Hastings, my friend, do you white men live together with women as we do—have you each a woman at home in your iglo, who waits on you with food, tans your skins and makes your clothes?"

"Yes," Hastings answered, "we have. Just like you, we have our women too."

"Hastings," Sakhawachiak went on; "you know that Igluruk is my woman and I am fond of her. But it sometimes happens that I have been in

50 Frozen Justice

places or have seen or done something that Igluruk is not to know. Then I say nothing; but if she asks and insists on an answer—well, then she gets it, but not the right one; for it is a man's right to judge what is best for a woman. Why should I make Igluruk unhappy? Why should she be needlessly vexed? No, it's far better that I should tell her a lie, only a little one, as little as possible, but still enough to keep her happy and hide from her what would bring tears to her eyes. That is our way, you see, and that is how our women are. Are you whites different from us, and are your women different? I'm sure I've met white men who have lied, and lied when there was no need."

"Yes," Hastings explained; "that is lying. Everything that is not the whole truth is a lie, whether it be said with good intent or not. We must not do it; the commandments must be kept strictly, or else we shall go to hell."

"So you say," protested Sakhawachiak; "but then we shall all go to hell. For I tell you—we have *got* to lie; we can't get on with our women without it, nor with others either. But tell me, Hastings, what then? Why must we keep the other nine commandments when we are forced daily to break the one? We shall go to hell anyhow, according to what you say; we shall get

punished whether we kill a man or not, or do any of the other bad things. . . . No, Hastings, I think what Uyarak says is better: he says there is one punishment for each offence; that is just, that we can understand."

The Eskimos glanced furtively at one another and smiled—for Sakhawachiak had expressed exactly what they all felt. Poor Mr. Hastings; it is so difficult to thump the white man's morality into native heads, particularly difficult when the natives know the white men well—almost impossible when those whites are whalers—and quite impossible when a pair of them like Jim Hacklet and Black Joe are living amongst the natives; they laughed at the missionary, made fun of his religion, and their manner of life at Nuwuk did no credit to the white man's doctrine.

For the two sailors felt themselves free and unfettered. For the first time in their lives they were under no restraint or compulsion of superiors or of society; they had masses of food, spirits by the gallon and trading goods in great demand, so they had all they desired, or else they could buy it, either with good things—the wonderful stores from the wreck of the *Bowhead*—or with evil—whisky.

They had bought women who lived with them in their house: dressed up, bedizened, frightful

52 Frozen Justice

to look at, hung all over with beads and bits of glass, tricked out till they scarcely deserved the name of women.

These creatures had given up their good, old-fashioned furs for modern clothes; instead of the anorak they now had a bodice, and airy skirts replaced the warm breeches. They had tied handkerchiefs round their heads—one crude colour screaming louder than another of foolishness, absurdity, barbaric love of finery, while the women froze so that their teeth chattered.

The women were smart—and envied; they had everything that other women had to pay through the nose for; and when they went strolling through Nuwuk, where such a show had never been seen before, there was not a woman who did not wish herself in their shoes.

But when the short day closed in, the worst characters in Nuwuk came to make merry in the hut—now called “Bowhead” after the crushed ship and with her name-plate over the door. They ate and drank, and deep men’s voices and shrill women’s cries were heard through the clear frosty night. Black Joe played the guitar—he had taken it ashore with him when he deserted—and they danced to its tinkling notes; danced as long as they could keep it up, drank till they knew nothing more; the lamp went out, hosts and guests slept in a heap, and next morning half-

stupefied natives reeled home to their iglos, to their men or their women, only to meet again in the evening under "Bowhead's" hospitable roof for new bouts of eating and drinking, for dancing and orgies.

They were days of conflict at Nuwuk; the white men had got in. In the biggest of the huts sat Uyarak telling old tales and legends; he impressed on his audience that all the evil spirits would harry those who set foot in Sakhawachiak's iglo, where Mr. Hastings was preaching the Gospel and denouncing Uyarak as the spokesman of the past age and heathenism; while Jim Hacklet and Black Joe and all their crew seemed to be devils incarnate.

Nuwuk was divided, and it was the white men's work. The inhabitants were parted into three camps, each of which hated the others and went its own way: towards superstition, towards the light, or towards destruction.

Once more the sun shone from a clear sky and the whale turned northward on his annual migration to safe and well-stocked seas, where he could disport himself in peace and without fear; but first he had to pass Nuwuk, and there lay umiak after umiak ready to hunt the mighty beast.

There was life and jollity out on the ice by the open coast water, where the struggle for exist-

ence was being fought out as it had been for centuries. But there too there was discord—for, though Sakhawachiak of all the natives was still the one who owned most umiaks and had most men in his pay, Uyarak and his party had now formed a boat's crew, and Black Joe and Jim Hacklet had no less than three umiaks out after whale.

They did not work together as before, but got in each other's way and scared the whale away from the other boats' crews whenever there was a chance; and many a whale, which in former years would have succumbed to the combined efforts of the Eskimos, now got safely past Nuwuk.

When the season was over, they had only a poor result to show for all their toil, for the quantity of whalebone collected ashore was only half what they usually got, and each party put the blame on the others. The rift in Nuwuk's harmony which had opened in the winter widened more and more during the spring season, whenever the anxious natives looked upon the poor results of their whaling.

Summer came, the time for the arrival of the whaling fleet was at hand, but as yet no one had seen a mast on the horizon or smoke over the white ice-floes.

And the rift went on widening. Uyarak de-

clared that he had talked with the angry gods, who were holding the ice fast to the shore in order to punish the apostates who flocked around Mr. Hastings with eager prayers to God for open water. These latter hated more and more the ungodly, whose fault it all was, since they would not listen to God's Word or see His guidance in the trials which beset Nuwuk, undoubtedly as a punishment for not having received His teaching. Now He was taking vengeance—the white man's God—upon all the ungodly who resorted to Uyarak, to Black Joe and Jim Hacklet.

White men's food began to get scarce, and anxiety increased from day to day, while the ice lay still and immovable, forced on to the land by continual westerly gales, and no water was to be seen.

Then a kayak man arrived from the south, from right down by Cape Lisbourne. Every one crowded round him to hear news of the whaling fleet, pushing and elbowing in their intense excitement.

He brought news, but it was not good. The whaling fleet had got jammed in the ice between Point Hope and Cape Lisbourne; first one vessel was crushed, then another; at last nearly half the fleet had gone to the bottom. The crews had been taken on board the ships that were still afloat, and these, overmanned, full of sickness

56 Frozen Justice

and short of provisions, were fighting their way out of the ice, southward-bound for warmer climes, away from the terrible ice which had taken so many ships, crushed so many hopes and killed so many men.

So the fleet did not come, but famine came instead; for the people of Nuwuk had grown accustomed to depend on the arrival of the ships and could no longer get on without the food they received from the fleet in exchange for whalebone and blubber.

When Jim Hacklet and Black Joe heard the news they sat for a while looking at each other as if they could not trust their ears; then Joe got up and went to the corner cupboard for a bottle of whisky, filled two glasses, one for himself and one for Jim: "Here's luck!" he said with a laugh—"Jim, do you see what this here means? We've got the chance of a lifetime, we're going to be rich, there's nobody else in Nuwuk that's got grub and store goods. What a strike, eh, Jim? When the fleet comes next year we'll clear out of Nuwuk two gaudy millionaires!"

"Yes," Jim answered—"you're right, we can do what we like, we can make the whole squalling crowd work for us—even Sakhawachiak himself'll have to come here and buy our stuff, but he'll find it dear—"

"Right!" interrupted Joe; "so dear that—we'll break him, the blighter! Now it's going to be us and not him on top in Nuwuk. We'll sweat him well for every scrap he wants. . . . Yes, I'll take his woman from him too. Jim, my boy, I bet you before next whaling season I'll have Igluruk here in our hut."

"You?" said Jim. "Well, maybe; one of us'll get her, that's likely enough. But whether it'll be you—why the hell should it be? I've got just as much right to her as you."

"Oh, shut it," snarled Joe; "you know damned well I shall take Igluruk. I'm more of a beauty than you—do you really think the girl would come to you, with a face on you like that? Look!"—and Joe snatched a looking-glass that hung on the wall and held it up before Jim's face.—"Take a look at your mug: do you really think you'll get the prettiest girl in Nuwuk?"

Jim had to admit the force of the argument, for it was not a handsome face that he saw in the glass: a shock of red hair, a big carrotty beard, a nose broken in a fight that had joined up again crooked, and finally a great red scar under the right eye—that was Jim Hacklet's portrait. With a gesture of annoyance he knocked aside the glass which Joe held up grinning. "Take it away, Joe, take it away. We needn't talk any

more about that, but we're going to be rich anyway—you'll have to agree with me there."

And while there was sorrow in all the little huts of Nuwuk, Black Joe and Jim Hacklet sat by themselves and drank whisky, drank quite quietly all night, while they talked of the golden future and dreamed beautiful dreams of the power of money.

It was the worst winter Nuwuk had experienced for a long while. The ice still lay close in to land, hunting was difficult and seals were few; so when the sun sank behind the southern horizon gilding ice, sky and snow, the caches were empty.

Now the white men had the field to themselves, and one after another the natives went over to Jim Hacklet and Joe, who promised to feed them till spring in return for their working for them and hunting for them in their umiaks when the whale was on the move again.

One fine day came Sakhawachiak, the last independent man in Nuwuk. He wanted to buy flour for Igluruk, but couldn't get it. "Hullo, Sakhawachiak, so you've come now!" the white men laughed. "This is the first time you've been to our hut, though we've been neighbours over a year. No, you'll have to pay us a proper visit and bring Igluruk with you before you can buy anything."

The woman would have her flour and gave

the wretched man no peace, so one evening he came. "Now Jim, I've come to call and brought Igluruk with me—can I have some flour now?"

This was Sakhawachiak's first visit to the white men's house, but it was not to be the last. He had to keep fifty men, and that cost a lot. First the white men bought his whalebone for next to nothing, then they took his furs—but he came back, no longer as Nuwuk's chief, but as a poor miserable native who, with his sledge full of whalebone and splendid furs, begged food for himself and his household.

Igluruk was always with him, and this man, hitherto so temperate, got more and more into the way of staying and drinking with the whites, drinking their poison, simply to forget, to deaden his uneasiness—yet never so much that he could not keep an eye on Igluruk; for it did not exactly please him to see what a number of presents Jim Hacklet and Black Joe lavished upon his woman.

His visits became more frequent as the winter dragged on. Mr. Hastings had left long ago, when Nuwuk went on short commons; he had sledged down to Point Hope, to friends and food, and there was nobody to hold Sakawachiak back, as he slipped rapidly downhill.

His whalebone was all sold; his skins now lay in the house the whites had built to receive the

60 Frozen Justice

huge quantity of goods they were able to buy dirt cheap; he had now nothing left but his five umiaks and their gear. If they went, his last hope for the whaling season next spring went too.

But Igluruk would have flour and sugar, coffee and tea; she liked the white men's spirits and their pretty cloth, and she worried her husband till he took the painful step—“What would they give for an umiak?”

He got a couple of sacks of flour and lots of spirits; he was going downhill, going fast, with no brake on, no helping hand to pull him up in time. Igluruk would not do without the white men's treasures and was now the woman in all Nuwuk who wore the smartest white man's clothes—and Sakhawachiak paid!

His boats' crews left him, one after another. Sakhawachiak was a good enough master, but he had no food; Jim Hacklet and Black Joe had—they went where they could be fed.

By the time the sun came back, Sakhawachiak was done. The insatiable whites had taken in barter all he possessed, even to his last umiak; and now he himself was their man, chief among them, to be sure, but still—never before had he worked for others.

It tortured him; he became silent and moody—but Igluruk was happy. She felt that, of all

the Nuwuk women, she was now the one the white men liked best to see in their hut; and, what was more, she much preferred cheery, good-looking Joe to her husband, who for so many years—ever since she was a child, in fact—had watched over and protected her.

Now she no longer looked with pride at Sakhawachiak—her eyes did not follow him as they used, for he was no better than the other natives; but Joe—he was, and he was a white man too, who could say pretty things to her, could play queer instruments and sing so beautifully; but better than all—the thing she valued most—he had power to do what he would.

One day, some time after the sun had come out of its winter slumber, Sakhawachiak sat at home in his iglo, glaring before him with dull, watery eyes, still fuddled from the last night's bacchanal. Suddenly a sledge drove up to the hut and he heard Black Joe's voice: "Sakhawachiak, come out; I want to have a word with you."

Igluruk jumped up and ran out; Sakhawachiak followed. "What do you want?"

"Well," answered Joe, "now that the sun has come you can see to hunt reindeer—and look here, Sakhawachiak, Igluruk was saying she'd like some fresh meat—I shouldn't mind some myself; and for twenty shoulders of reindeer I'll give you an umiak with gear and a full crew."

That shook Sakhawachiak out of his torpor; there was still a hope of regaining his lost position. "Well, but the reindeer are a long way off, right over by the Kugerakuk, many days' sledge-journey from here. I should have to drive fast and light, couldn't take Igluruk with me. Who will look after her while I'm away?"

"I will," answered Joe; "I forgot to tell you that we'll give Igluruk all the food she needs while you're away hunting."

A struggle was going on in Sakhawachiak—if he went, he might win back all he had lost, he might make himself independent again, and if he had luck with the weather and game was plentiful, he might be back in three weeks. But Igluruk?—could he let her stay-behind? For he knew very well that she was handsome and that the white men had a fancy for her.

For a long time he sat silent, nor did he notice the furtive glances between Igluruk and Black Joe—his thoughts worked as never before—what was he to do?

"Well, Sakhawachiak," Joe interrupted his thoughts; "have you made up your mind yet?"

But the native sat still, thinking, weighing the chances for and against. His craving for independence worked for acceptance—against it his fears for Igluruk.

Frozen Justice 63

"What do *you* say?" he asked at last, turning to her.

"Go," she answered without hesitation; "go at once; it won't be long before the whale comes and then you must be back. Go, Sakhawachiak, I shall get on all right—it's not the first time you've left me—but it's the first time I haven't had reindeer meat in spring. Do go, Sakhawachiak."

He was still in doubt—it was hard to decide; but Joe was tired of waiting. "Sakhawachiak," he said harshly, "you remember our agreement when I bought your last umiak. You promised to do what I wanted, and now I *want* you to go, and at once!"

Sakhawachiak flew up—never before had any man dared to speak to him like that; but Joe laughed. "You forget that you're in my pay and that I can order you about. If you don't go, neither you nor Igluruk will get anything to eat."

That cut to the quick—it was true, the white man could both order him about and refuse him food—this dependence was intolerable. But as payment for three weeks' hunting he might regain his independence. His decision was made.

"Yes, Joe, I'll go."

64 Frozen Justice

Next day he drove out of Nuwuk, the home of his fathers, driven away, starved out . . . but on the same day Igluruk moved down to the white men's hut as Black Joe's woman. Her mate was again the first man in Nuwuk, and now he was a white man into the bargain.

IV

ON the bank of the Kugerakuk, in a valley facing south—a regular sun-trap—lay a score of iglos, cunningly built of blocks of ice, hemispherical, the casual homes of wandering hunters. They lasted as long as they could—not very long in the spring-time, for the broiling sun eats into the snow, while the warmth inside the iglo brings water streaming from walls and roof; the huts disappeared rapidly, and as rapidly new ones were built—the village on the bank of the Kugerakuk was always shifting, continually transformed.

These iglos are cosy and warm inside, where women and children are on the move all day long; they are clean and tidy, as they do not last long enough for dirt to collect. Skins and furs spread on benches of snow serve as beds; a lamp or two swing from the ceiling, filled with train-oil which sends out a heavy warmth into the little room; and here all utensils, tools and weapons are arranged in their proper places, while little offshoots from the main iglo form splendid cold-storage rooms for all the reindeer carcases that have been brought in from the country round.

Year after year the Eskimos come back to this place, which is the best centre for reindeer on the north coast. People come from Nuwuk, but most hail from the east, whence they come with the double object of hunting reindeer and meeting western traders.

The whole autumn and winter are spent in preparing for this hunting and trade gathering, and when the sun is high in the sky they set out from their distant homes. Family after family joins the company, and every spring the great caravan winds its way along the north coast of Alaska—a score of sledges or more.

When blizzards come on and the snow whirls high, the travellers build snow huts and wait for better weather. They keep warm and cheerful in the huts and amuse themselves by discussing all that they will see and hear when they get to the Kugerakuk—but as soon as the sun comes out, they start again, laughing, chattering and singing—a noisy procession.

Their yellow umiaks are lashed fast to the sledges, filled to the gunwhale with whalebone and skins, and if the wind is fair, sails are hoisted. Then the journey becomes a holiday and they tear along—the grown-ups running gleefully by the side of the sledge, while the little ones make themselves warm nests among the furs in the umiaks,

from which their black inquisitive eyes peer out at the rapidly shifting landscape.

But when there is a head wind the men harness themselves, walking beside the sledge and pulling so that the sweat pours off them; the bigger children help, the women too, but in front of each team a woman runs, with her smallest child on her back inside her warm anorak. She encourages the dogs with stirring shouts and shows the way, while her every limb thrills with joy; she gives a yell and leaps forward, jumps high into the air so that the little one bumps against her naked back—but what does she care for cold or wind or fatigue or new-born babes?—she's westward bound for the Kugerauk.

And when the season is over they turn eastward again. The ice is gone and the sledge useless; it is taken to pieces and stowed in the umiak, which sails homeward deeply laden with the glories of the West and with a whole army of people and dogs on board. The gut sail is set, trimmed to catch the faintest breeze, and with women laughing and singing at the paddles the umiak shoots over the water, while the sun streams down and seals put up their heads to look at the cheerful convoy. They rest motionless in the water, watching the yellow skin-boat with their great round, bright eyes; they turn their heads slightly

to hear the singing better—but suddenly a spear whizzes through the air, thrown by one of the kayak men. The seal gives a start, its head swings round like lightning, and the happy glance in its eye gives place to a look of pain. Then the seal dives, with death in its heart, while the women and children in the umiak laugh, sing and clap their hands over the animal's death-struggle—it is a fine thing to be alive when death is grappling with other creatures.

Ah, that journey to the Kugerakuk is a holiday, and the stay there is a holiday too. The women have not much to do, but sit outside the iglos gossiping and basking in the sun; they talk of everything that has happened in the course of the winter—of the children that have been born and the people who have died; they snigger and giggle over stories of unexpected encounters in dark iglos when the lamp was put out after a feast and passions were let loose; they tell each other how many men have changed wives during the winter, and they stop working to hear about the young girl who hasn't found a mate but is looking for one everywhere.

And in the evening when the sun is setting the men come back from their day-long wandering over the frozen tundra, laden with skins and meat,

which the expectant women take charge of with laughter and song.

And to this cheerful camp on the Kugerakuk came Sakhawachiak, sent there by Black Joe, driven there by his own longing to recover something of his former position, and in the hope that rapid and successful hunting would give him enough meat to enable him to claim an umiak in exchange—and with it his independence and, above all, his self-respect.

Sakhawachiak was alone and so could not keep house, but he found shelter in a friend's iglo, where he lived all the time he stayed on the Kugerakuk.

He was well known to all the Eskimos from the east country; they were his friends of old days—most of them, no doubt, were friends still; but the few who came from Nuwuk brought with them the report of his degradation, and his fall, great as it was, did not lose in their telling. Whenever his back was turned they smiled in a knowing way and told everybody who cared to listen about the white men at Nuwuk and about Sakhawachiak—once a chief and the biggest man in the settlement, now utterly destitute, in the white men's pay, sent by them to the Kugerakuk to hunt reindeer, while in his absence they took his last remaining possession—Igluruk.

The Eskimos laughed—simple, unsuspecting fool!—how could he imagine he would be a match for the whites!—and the Nuwuk Eskimos went swaggering around: *they* had given in long ago, *they* had seen which way the wind blew, but still they had felt Sakhawachiak's firm opposition to the whites as a reproach to themselves, who simply went with the stream and never thought of turning to resist it as Sakhawachiak had done.

But now he was being carried downstream as fast as the others, perhaps faster, for his strength was quite exhausted by his efforts to resist it and dam its overwhelming force—and they were glad, all those who had fallen before he did, to see that silent reproach removed, to see him forced to his knees by the white men, knocked out, and nevertheless in their pay.

In the evening, when they took their ease in cosy iglos, Sakhawachiak was the theme of endless talks, and old stories of his great days were drawn forth from the shades of oblivion, altered, distorted—all of them stories against him, for, now that he had lost his power, there were plenty of men ready to assert that he had wronged and cheated them in bargains over skins and whale-bone.

Poor Sakhawachiak! The white men took everything from him—they had taken himself—his woman too—and now they took the last thing

he had left, the respect his countrymen had unconsciously paid him as the best hunter and biggest trader in Nuwuk—the man they could go to for help when sickness kept the hunter indoors and hunger and want threatened his family.

They rejoiced, all these small natures who had never been able to raise themselves to Sakhawachiak's level, and endless were the stories of his degradation which went round the snow huts on the Kugerakuk . . . but only when he was out hunting; for the memory of his strength and former power was lively enough when he was in their midst, and kept them in check.

But Sakhawachiak was not often at home; he was out hunting early and late; scouring the tundra with his dog-team. If he discovered a herd of reindeer he summoned all his hunter's craft to lay low as many as possible of them, and his hunting often took him so far from the Kugerakuk settlement that he would not waste time in returning when darkness came on. For, unlike other Eskimos, he had learnt to set up a goal, pursue it, keep it in view early and late and never give up.

He had worked for great aims before, but never so great as now—it was not the twenty reindeer he was after, but his whole future, his independence and self-respect depended on the issue.

If it chanced that when darkness fell he was

far from the settlement and on the track of reindeer, he dug himself into the snow or threw up a little breastwork around him—and there he slept, surrounded by his dogs, so as to be ready as soon as the first rays of the sun shot up over the hills in the north-east and gave life to the dead white flats of the tundra, which, blushing and glittering with countless ice-crystals, bade the sun—its worst enemy—welcome.

Then Sakhawachiak awoke, shook the snow off his clothes, stretched himself and drew in the fresh spring air—ate a little frozen meat, harnessed his dogs to the sledge and drove off, choosing the highest ridges, whence his keen eyes reconnoitred the plain for miles around. If he saw a dark spot which might mean reindeer, he kept still, his eyes fastened to the spot, sitting immovable—his look took on the gleam of a beast of prey's as it watched for the slightest movement of the dark point: was it a reindeer or a rock?

If it did not move he drove on; but if the faintest movement was visible he approached, to leeward of the animal, as near as possible—and there the hunt began. Crawling on his stomach or running bent double behind every little elevation of the ground, he drew near to the unsuspecting beast—and only when he was close to it and had to cross a flat open space with no possibility of cover, did he creep forward with

the antlers of a dead deer raised high above his head.

The reindeer sees him, but suspects nothing wrong, for Sakhawachiak nods with the horns and makes a munching sound deceptively like a reindeer—there can't be any danger and the animal goes on quietly grazing, until suddenly there is a whizz through the air; she starts up, looks round at the supposed male, now on two legs, leaps away to avoid the unknown danger, but is overtaken by the spear, which, hurled by a sure hand, strikes behind the shoulder—to the heart.

This was everyday work for Sakhawachiak, but each time he brought down a deer it made him happier; and out there on the tundra, where he could look about him for miles without seeing a soul and could go where he would without meeting white men or the ill-concealed smiles of the natives, he found himself again. The whisky was out of him, driven off by the keen, fresh air, he held himself erect and trod the ground as he used to do, with a sure, self-reliant step—and suddenly it came upon him that he hated the white men, hated those blackguards that he had helped so often, whose friend he had counted himself, but who were only waiting till he exposed himself—like the reindeer just now—to give him the death-blow.

And it was not even in honourable fight that

the white men had won; they won, not because they were more capable than he, but simply because they were more callous. One white man would always help another, there was more comradeship among them than in his own race; and then the whites had taught the natives to use things which they could no longer do without—that was how they won. As a hunter, as a trader, nay, even as a man, he felt himself superior to the white man.

It made him smart to think of Black Joe and Jim Hacklet, of his dependence on them, of the way they had scorned him; and all his hatred of white men concentrated itself on these two. Sakhawachiak's eyes flashed with hate and the desire for revenge, he clenched his spear more tightly till it quivered in his hand; there would have been trouble if he had met them then.

The hardships of the country and his training as a hunter had taught Sakhawachiak to wait—his time would surely come, but first he would get those twenty shoulders of reindeer; that was a promise, that was business, and when he had got the umiak in return, he would know how to get along by himself and win back his power—he would keep out of the snares the white men set for him.

And then, but not till then, vengeance might come—sooner or later he would find an oppor-

tunity of hitting the white men so hard that they would never forget it.

On across the tundra dashed Sakhawachiak's team, the dogs feeling that they had a master once more; reindeer after reindeer fell to his hand, soon he would have what he had come for—and then back to Nuwuk, to Igluruk—to the white men.

There was feasting, and orgy of gluttony, on the banks of the Kugerakuk. Game had been killed far in excess of expectations; now the men could take it easy for a while, and the day before Sakhawachiak was to start for Nuwuk the whole population of the camp collected outside the huts, gorged with food—now was the time for the dance, the wild hula-hula.

Sakhawachiak was happy; his decision was made: the two white men should be driven out of the country or killed as soon as he got back to Nuwuk; early next morning he would be on the trail and this was the last day of his degradation. His heathen forefathers awoke in him—he seized a spear and danced, danced as they did in the old days, danced as they used to do when passions broke loose and there was going to be bloodshed. He thought of his tormentors, thought of his revenge, his eyes shot lightnings and his cheeks flushed red beneath their natural brown; with stiff legs and hair hanging loose he went back-

wards and forwards, hurling threats against the whites, scorning them and all their works. He thrust about him with his spear—it was not he, Sakhawachiak, that was dancing, it was not he that controlled his movements—it was the spirit of all his heathen forefathers that forced his tongue to utter the scornful words and his arm to wave in threatening gestures.

Around him stood his countrymen. They had forgotten their laughter, forgotten Sakhawachiak's fall; and in the breast of every man and woman his dance and his words roused dormant savagery—they swayed in time, their steps followed his; this was a dance like those of their younger days.

All the onlookers followed the scene with breathless excitement; they had a feeling that something was going to happen . . . but suddenly those on the outside of the crowd were plucked out of the hypnosis of the dance and turned to see who was coming, for all the dogs that were loose had rushed off towards the west with a terrific barking. They shaded their eyes with their hand and peered across the flat tundra —there was a sledge tearing along, drawn by eight active dogs, with a man standing on it swinging his long whip.

Who could it be? Several more turned to look at the rapidly approaching sledge, which was now

swinging round the farthest iglo of settlement—
oho, it's Uyarak, the angekok of Nuwuk, coming
to town!

He jumped off the sledge, whose whole team
started a furious battle with the dogs of the place,
and joined the nearest Eskimos to watch Sakhawachiak's dance.

"Aha, it's he, is it?" said Uyarak aloud; "my
word, how he dances! But in Nuwuk his woman
is dancing another kind of dance—she lives in
Black Joe's hut now."

Uyarak's words passed from mouth to mouth;
a dead silence fell on the crowd, agape with ex-
citement—for everybody knew Sakhawachiak and
his love for the unworthy Igluruk.

But with his stiff legs and his fixed, blazing
eyes, with spear in hand and the words of his
heathen ancestors on his tongue, Sakhawachiak
still strode backwards and forwards, oblivious of
everything but his dance. He did not notice the
silence around him, only shouted his scoffs and
threats louder and louder—but all at once he
stopped, quite rigid with upraised spear; the
words died away on his lips—*there* he had caught
it, and he slowly turned to listen to the mut-
tering men and women; the name—Igluruk—
scattered his heathen ancestors and recalled him
to the present—to his own sorrow and shame.

What is that they're saying?—he still stood

listening, and then heard the creak of footsteps behind him and Uyarak's voice: "Yes, Sakhawachiak, Igluruk is living with Black Joe now—that's what happens to those who forsake the gods of their fathers!"

At that instant all his heathen blood surged up in him; his ears sang, he reeled, then pulled himself up and turned round, slowly, his brain working with frenzied rapidity. What was that? What had happened—what was it he was saying? . . . and at the same moment he heard Uyarak's voice close beside him saying: "Sakhawachiak, the white men have taken your woman."

He heard it plainly and his mind cleared, he became uncannily calm; but he turned sharply on Uyarak, who fell back a step, repelled by the burning, bloodshot eyes—and all the natives huddled together, fearful of what was to happen. "Uyarak, you lie! She couldn't do it, the white men wouldn't do it either—" exclaimed Sakhawachiak; but in his heart he knew all the time that it was true; and Uyarak laughed: "Oh yes, Sakhawachiak, it's true. And what of it?—she's only a woman and that's the way with all of them."

Then something snapped in the tormented man; he bent back and hurled his spear forward with all his force. It flashed in the air like a thunderbolt from the gods and the point struck right in the throat of Uyarak; with the blood gurgling

from his mouth the angekok tottered and fell, hurled backwards by the spear and Sakhawachiak's strength—dead.

Sakhawachiak stepped to his fallen enemy, jerked the spear out of his throat and swung the bloody weapon above his head; he turned about to look for other enemies, to catch a mocking smile on some man's mouth—but all were serious; they drew back before his furious glance, none dared join issue with him. Then after spurning with his foot the dead angekok, who lay on the white snow in a pool of blood, the warmth of which ate away the snow beneath him, Sakhawachiak went off to his hut, tore and wrenched at the traces, harnessed his dogs, leapt on the sledge and dashed off, waving his spear in the air, bound for Nuwuk along the trail that Uyarak had just come by.

Pitching and swaying the sledge flew over the tundra; the smooth ivory runners shrieked against the frozen snow, and the sledge lurched and ran on one runner every time it collided with a stone or some small unevenness. But Sakhawachiak sat tight; in his hand he held the whip, whose frozen lash rained down upon the dogs, and these, fired by his shouts and the smarting lash, ran as they had never run before, while their master yelled and screamed—faster, faster, run, run, we're going to Nuwuk, to Igluruk, to Black Joe!

The sun shone upon the tundra, spring clouds drifted lazily over the blue of the sky, all nature breathed peace and calm, all was restful, all save this human atom, who flew on over the endless flats, seething with hate, leaving murder behind him and bearing murder in his heart. For Black Joe was to die, that was Sakhawachiak's fixed determinition—faster, dogs, faster!—and the whip swished down on the heated animals, who moaned and snarled at the lash but ran faster, as fast as they could go, along the trail made by Uyarak and his team.

The day was passing, but still Sakhawachiak drove his reluctant dogs forward. Their feet were cut and bleeding from the sharp ice, the pads torn to pieces, leaving a track of blood, and the dogs were blinded by the stinging whip, to escape which they ran on, but which was always over them. On the sledge Sakhawachiak was kneeling, still consumed by hate, balancing as the sledge lurched over an uneven bit of ground; and swung the whip faster than ever now that the dogs were tired. And if a dog fell, he seized the trace and dragged the yelling animal up on to the sledge—drew his knife and plunged it to the hilt into the dog's chest—then away with the body, over the side, back with the knife into the sheath and up with the whip—and down came

slash upon slash over the backs of the wretched animals.

They got too tired to pull him any longer, so he jumped off and ran beside the sledge with his whip in his hand, swinging it over his head and down on to the dogs, who ran on, stumbling, dazed, worn-out—ran on because they were born to run, because they were driven forward by a man hard as iron, who would rather drive the team till they all dropped than stop.

Towards evening the wild drive slackened—the dogs could no more. Five he had thrown out, broken, killed; he had only four left; but he had to go on, he *would* go on without thought of rest—even when the dogs threw themselvs down and would not be roused by the blows or kicks—for still the madness raged in his blood and drove him on.

The dogs gave up; they could do no more and he let them lie, but bent over his old leader and patted his bloody coat—in silent thanks for work well done. And the dog understood it, raised his head and licked his hand, looking at him with big questioning eyes—never before had his master driven him like this. He sat down in front of the dog, took its head in his hands and looked into the beautiful brown eyes. . . . “Puyark, Ig-luruk’s gone, taken by Black Joe”. . . and the

82 Frozen Justice

dog licked his hand as though in sympathy with his sorrow; for two brief moments the two old sledge-mates took leave of each other. But Sakhawachiak had no time to wait—his knife flashed and he drove it deep into Puyark's throat —then he rose again and started to walk westward with aching limbs, while the darkness fell around him and blotted out the rough places on his path.

He staggered onward through the dark, stumbled on ice, fell, rested an instant, then sprang up and tottered on. His hate burned as strong as ever, his one thought was to get on to the westward—to Nuwuk, Igluruk, and revenge.

He kept on, in spite of darkness and aching limbs, all through the night; but when the sun rose, its beams fell on a wayworn man who, succumbing to fatigue and mental agitation, had fallen over a piece of ice and slept, head on arm, just where he lay, with his legs resting on the lump of ice.

At the same instant the tired wanderer awoke. He rubbed his eyes, unable at first to understand what had happened, and had to collect his thoughts before the terrible truth broke in upon the numbness of exhaustion. Then everything became clear, and with a bound he would have been away again, but he stumbled and fell—the fatigues of the previous day and night had been too much

for him. He *would* go on, but was nevertheless forced to curb his eagerness; carefully and slowly he walked, leaning on his spear.

Gradually he worked the stiffness out of his limbs and could run again, but the going was heavy, for he had lost the trail in the course of the night; that made matters worse, as he now had to make a new track for himself through the pathless desert's loose covering of snow, in which he sank to the knees.

Long after the sun had reached its highest and begun to descend, he came to a hut. The woman, Cropcana, was alone at home and gave him meat—he swallowed it and would have been off again, but tiredness and the heavy heat of the house lulled him to sleep.

He did not hear the man, Topsia, come home, nor the conversation between the two. “It’s Sakhawachaik,” whispered Cropcana. “He came staggering into the iglo and asked for food—yes, and dogs and a sledge. He talked about Igluruk and Black Joe, but then he fell asleep—and he’s sleeping still. You know Black Joe has taken Igluruk, and Uyarak drove eastward some days ago; he must have told Sakhawachiak what has happened, and now . . .” Cropcana made a very eloquent movement of the head in the direction of Nuwuk.

Topsia understood. “Yes, and now he’s bound

that way. But if we get to Nuwuk before him and warn Black Joe, the news will be worth some flour and sugar—let's go!"

His wife nodded assent; the sledge was got ready cautiously, the dogs harnessed, and while Sakhawachiak slept on, Topsia and Cropcana were urging on their dogs so as to reach Nuwuk as quickly as possible. No ideal consideration prompted them—oh dear no, nothing so fine as that—but for a sack of flour and a few handfuls of sugar they were quite willing to betray a countryman and help the whites, who had done so much harm at Nuwuk.

Deeply as Sakhawachiak already felt his abandonment by his own people, yet, when he awoke and found the hut empty and in darkness, his bitterness rose anew—ungrateful wretches that they were, had they entirely forgotten how he had helped them, as long as he had anything himself?

But it was no time for barren reflections on the ingratitude of humanity; they only spurred him on the more. He took his spear and such food as he could hastily snatch up in the iglo, and followed the trail made a couple of hours before by Cropcana and Topsia, who with fresh dogs had and kept a big start on Sakhawachiak.

Iglos are few and far between on the bleak coast of Alaska, but iglos there are, and when at length Sakhawachiak reached the next, whose in-

mates had heard from Cropcana that he was coming, he did not ask for dogs and sledge—he knew they would be refused. He just took the dogs and harnessed them to a sledge, but he kept his knife between his teeth all the time, and his spear was handy.

Then he dashed off in the tracks of Cropcana and Topsia, but they were making better pace than he—they had their own dogs, while his were strange. That made a big difference, and when Topsia rounded the headland at Nuwuk and drove up to Black Joe's house, Sakhawachiak was struggling with his dogs in deep, soft snow, a day's journey from Nuwuk.

V

SINCE Sakhawachiak's fall the white men had exercised unrestricted sway over Nu-wuk and its inhabitants, as there were no other Eskimos with sufficient authority to oppose their two exploiters, Jim Hacklet and Black Joe, who went about lording it over them.

They had been lucky. Quite early in the season, long before the whaling was over, they had landed big stores of whalebone; but this result was not due to the white men's skill or the Eskimos' industry—it was all sheer luck and nothing else; for whales were so plentiful that year that it was impossible not to take them, however lazy Eskimos might be. And lazy they were, having learnt the art from the white seamen—they only worked when Jim Hacklet or Black Joe was by, the rest of the time they idled. The demoralization introduced by the whites was spreading fast.

Inside their hut the two worthies sat enjoying themselves. They looked at the big bundles of whalebone and the huge quantities of furs they had collected in the course of a couple of years and thought it all very good; but they did not notice

the change in the inhabitants. They rejoiced over the great chance that had come to them and that they had exploited to the full without troubling about its cost to others—in respect for the white man, amongst other things.

Igluruk sat in the hut and quite fitted in there. She liked a life of idleness without a thought for the morrow; she lived more than ever in the present, and was happy when Black Joe was in a cheerful mood and smiled at her. Then she would nestle up to him, caressing and supple as a cat; but when the day's work was over and the white men began drinking, she grew timid and scared. Then the smile vanished from Black Joe's face and Jim Hacklet looked more ill-favoured than ever; they quarrelled and came to blows over the least difference of opinion and treated her as she had never been treated in Sakhawachiak's iglo—there she had felt herself the equal of her mate; here she was only a toy which could be used, thrown away, or even destroyed, according to the owner's pleasure.

All the same she was well pleased with her change of men, for she was still conscious that she was the first of her sex in Nuwuk and the leading man's woman. Only rarely did she think of Sakhawachiak, still more rarely of the grief he would feel on seeing her with Joe; but at times a feeling of anxiety and fear would overwhelm

her at the thought of his return. . . . What would happen? Would he accept the situation, or . . . And she went to Black Joe with her trouble. He comforted her and laughed. "Never you mind about him; he's done, finished, no good, only does what I tell him." But in spite of his big words Black Joe could not quite get rid of his uneasiness—one never knows what these natives may take it into their heads to do—and he too often worried about the day when Sakhawachiak would return.

But when the whisky had befogged his understanding and dulled his fears, he would talk to Jim Hacklet about Sakhawachiak and all he was going to do to plague and torment the man. In that state he was valiant and bold—of course Sakhawachiak wasn't going to get that umiak, whether he brought the twenty reindeer or not—you didn't have to keep a promise to the likes of him; he'd break him, that's what he'd do, force him to live in the hut with them and see Igluruk another man's woman.

He laughed at the thought—but Jim Hacklet did not laugh. He was a better judge of men than Black Joe and was pretty sure that Sakhawachiak could be goaded until he cast off the yoke; but he comforted Joe. "Oh well, p'raps he's not so very dangerous. He's only a native after all, and you ought to be able to manage him

all right. All the same, now we're talking about it, I tell you I'm darned glad I was too ugly for the gal to take a fancy to *me*. You can't quite tell how that blamed nigger may shape."

Black Joe laughed louder. "I'll flog him with my dogwhip till he crawls in the snow at my feet," he boasted. "I'll make him—yes, I'll make him coxswain of my umiak—all among the women rowers. My word, won't it be sport to make an old woman of him, his high-and-mightiness that wouldn't speak to anything less than a skipper!"

Jim had his own thoughts but kept them to himself; for he had no objection to getting rid of Black Joe—then all the riches would be his; and in a quiet way he did what he could to encourage the grandiloquent Joe in the idea of degrading Sakhawachiak as much as possible—the bow might be bent until it broke, and he was quite ready to see it done.

While the white men were talking, Igluruk sat and listened. She understood that it was about Sakhawachiak and was glad when Black Joe remembered her existence and translated some of their talk. To her he was even more boastful than to Jim, and Igluruk clapped her hands with joy at Joe's threats against her former husband. If he could humble Sakhawachiak as he promised to do, there was not the

slightest doubt that she had really got the strongest man in Nuwuk for her mate—she had every reason to be happy and need fear nothing.

One day all three were sitting in the hut, the two men at the table, drinking—she on the floor, as is right and proper when a white man takes a native as his mate. They were discussing the approaching summer, the voyage to San Francisco and all the fine things that money would bring them, when they heard a sledge drive up and stop outside the door.

The men looked at each other and Black Joe turned pale; Sakhawachiak was just about due back—could this be he, coming to call him to account for what he had done to Igluruk?

A cold shudder ran down his back and he looked round for some weapon, for defence or murder, but quickly recovered his nerve; of course it was impossible for Sakhawachiak to be back so soon . . . and when he heard a strange voice he was himself again—curse his fears! he wished the meeting was over, but if the man tried to make trouble, he'd soon . . . !

Black Joe's thoughts were interrupted by the door opening, and in came Topsia and Cropcana; they shut it behind them and sat down quietly, without saying a word.

"Good day," said Black Joe with a laugh; "you have a queer way of coming into a stranger's

house—it's not how we white men do it. We knock at the door, wait till somebody says 'come in,' and then say what we've got to say. But you just sit and stare. See here, you blasted natives, get outside and come in properly."

Igluruk laughed: this was Black Joe's idea of humour; and she laughed still more when Topsia and Cropcana slunk out and shut the door behind them. It was a grand joke, and she slapped her thighs with glee when she heard their timid knock and Black Joe's stern voice say "Come in!" Oh, that Joe, did anybody ever see such a man for jokes?

Topsia sat down and Cropcana stood by the door. Black Joe sat at the table making faces at both of them, he was feeling so happy now; what a hell of a scare he'd had when he heard the sledge coming!— "Well, you people, what do you want? Got anything to sell?"

There was a pause before they answered, and Jim put a bottle and glasses on the table—always a great help in dealing with the natives. "No, we don't want to sell, we've come to get a little flour and sugar. Sakhawachiak, he's . . ."

"What do you say?" shouted Black Joe, starting up—"what about Sakhawachiak? What do you want? have you met him? is he dead?—can't you speak, curse you!"

"We wanted some flour—" began Cropicana.
"—Yes, and some sugar too—" added Topsia,
"—Sakhawachiak . . . well, we've seen him,
he's coming. . . ."

"What? where? when?" shouted Joe, turning pale, while Jim went over to the door and shut it securely. "When's he coming? where did you see him?— By God, Jim, he may be here any minute if these fools have seen him. . . . Speak, man, speak!" he exclaimed, seizing Topsia by the shoulder and shaking him; "speak, man, are you dumb?"

"We want a sack of flour," answered Topsia, with more assurance now that he saw the impression Sakhawachiak's name made on the white men. "No, we want two—and sugar—" added Cropicana—"lots of it. Before we have it on our sledge we won't say anything."

"Let 'em have it then," cried Joe to Jim; "give 'em what they want and let's hear what they've got to say. These natives are enough to drive you mad—so slow, so darned slow— Lord, what people!" But he was in such a hurry to hear what Topsia had to say that he helped Jim to carry the sacks out to the sledge.

"There now," he said, calmer now that his first fright had subsided; "out with your story; God knows we've paid enough for it—what is it you've got to tell?"

"Sakhawachiak came to our iglo," Cropcana began, "long past midday, two days ago. His eyes were wild, the whites of them were red, his clothes were torn, he was so tired that he could scarcely walk, and hungry. 'Where do you come from?' I asked. He didn't answer, but sat staring in front of him. I got quite scared of him and said no more till he had eaten—then I asked again where he came from and he answered, 'from the Kugerakuk.' But suddenly he jumped up: 'Cropcana, have you heard anything about Igluruk and Black Joe?' and his eyes almost started out of his head, he glared at me so.

"I couldn't tell how much he had heard, and so I said no. Then he was silent . . . but a little while after he began again. . . . 'Uyarak said that Igluruk was living in Black Joe's hut now—is that true?' I said I didn't know; I didn't dare say anything else, he looked so terrible. And then he was silent a little and only sat and glared; but at last he spoke again: 'Let me have dogs, Cropcana, and a sledge; mine are lying on the trail.'

"'Where did you meet Uyarak?' I asked again. 'Uyarak?' he said, looking up at me. 'Oh well, on the Kugerakuk—he died.' . . ."

But here Cropcana was interrupted by Black Joe, who sprang up with an oath, his face pale as death. "Dead, did you say?—is he dead,

94 Frozen Justice

where did he die, how did he die? did Sakhawachiak kill him?" And turning to his partner he burst out— "Shut the door, Jim, shut the door for hell's sake, he'll be here in a minute!"

"No," said Cropcana reassuringly, "no, not so quickly. He got no dogs from us, for he was tired and fell asleep and slept so heavily that he didn't hear us harness them when Topsia came home from hunting. He sat asleep when we started; but he talked in his sleep about Joe and Igluruk and about Uyarak—he talked about . . ."

"Oh, stop it, stop it," shouted Joe. "Give me time to think. So he was asleep, was he?—ah, if I'd caught him asleep he'd never have waked again. What shall we do, Jim, we shall soon have this madman here, he'll kill me—shut up, Igluruk! don't howl, it don't do any good to cry, shut up, can't you!— Cropcana, what more did he say?"

"He didn't say much—only muttered in his sleep about you two and talked about killing—but we didn't want to wake him, we wanted to get a good start. How long he slept we don't know; he was asleep when we left and can't possibly be here yet; we had the dogs and he had none, and couldn't get any before he reached Kanara's iglo—he has dogs and a sledge, and he has always been friendly with Sakhawachiak."

"Curse the woman!"—and Joe sprang up as though he would strike her. "You're torturing me on purpose. Didn't you tell Kanara he mustn't let Sakhawachiak have his dogs? Get away with you—leave me alone with Jim. Clear out—sharp!"

A couple of seconds later Cropcana and Topsia were standing outside in the snow by their sledge. They felt the flour sack and enjoyed hearing the creaking of the contents as they pressed it; they tasted the sugar, and then drove away homeward, well pleased with their bargain—but they took another way than the one they had come by; they had no desire to meet Sakhawachiak now.

The two whites and Igluruk were left in the hut, where they sat in uneasy silence; but suddenly Black Joe started up. "Jim, Jim, tell me what I'm to do!" he whimpered, pale with fear and shaking with apprehension. "Jim, you've got to help me— Oh, Jim, he'll kill me sure!"

"Yes, p'raps he will," Jim answered quietly and coolly—luckily this did not concern him—"but why shouldn't you shoot him?—easy enough, and I don't suppose Sakhawachiak has a gun with him, not many of the natives have them—he has only his spear, so it oughtn't to be very hard to manage him, and he's only a native, isn't he?"

96 Frozen Justice

"Oh, it's all right for you to talk," said Joe hoarsely; "it isn't you he's after, but me. Suppose I miss him and he harpoons me"— Black Joe shuddered at the thought; he took his head in his hands in desperate attempt to collect himself. "I daren't, Jim, I daren't."

"All right, leave it alone, let him kill you; I don't care—it's your affair. But if you daren't stop and face the music—then clear out, run away down the coast to Point Hope, to Candle, to 'Frisco, if you like; you can go to hell for all I care, it don't matter a cent to me. But if you go, take that shrieking rag-bag with you; it's enough to drive a man mad to hear her howl"— Jim turned to Igluruk—"Shut up, you slut, you're not being murdered yet, are you? I wasn't good-looking enough for you; I hope you're proud of your handsome husband—look at him, look at the brave hero!"

Jim turned on his heel, took his fur coat from its peg and went out—where he could quietly hug himself over this new piece of luck which the fickle Dame Fortune had tossed into his lap; for he thought it a sure thing that Joe would go, and then everything would be his, whalebone, skins and all.

An hour later Jim Hacklet came back and found the house turned upside down. Joe was tearing about, crazy, beside himself with fear, throwing

everything topsy-turvy and flinging his belongings into a heap. "What are you up to, Joe?" what are you looking for? what's the matter?" asked Jim with a grin.

Joe looked up at him with eyes fixed in deadly terror. "I'm going, Jim, I daren't meet that madman, he'll kill me. But you'll stay here, and when you come out with the fleet we'll share up won't we, Jim, we'll share up according to agreement."

"No," said Jim curtly and firmly. "If you quit and leave me in charge here, the whole caboodle goes to me. If you stop here, we share up—supposing you're still alive—that's the agreement; but if you quit or get perforated by Sakhawachiak, I take the lot. It isn't me that's driving you away from Nuwuk; for all I care you can stop here till you rot—it don't matter a curse to me."

Joe begged and prayed as he hustled about. "Oh Jim, you can't be so hard on a chap. Haven't we been partners through thick and thin for a couple of years nearly? Let's share the profits now, and I'll take the smallest share—only give me something."

Jim was not to be moved. "Stay or go, it's all the same to me; but if you go, I'm not going to share—unless it's with Sakhawachiak," he added with a malicious laugh; "when all's said and

done, he has more right to it than either you or me."

Joe decided to leave. He loaded a sledge in a hurry, while Jim kept an eye on him to see that he didn't take any of their common property; and with the best dogs to be had in Nuwuk and Igluruk, still howling, on the sledge Joe took the southward trail—never to return.

That day the whaling was suspended—the news of Joe's departure was carried right out to the coast water, and everybody came in to see him start. The Eskimos grinned at each other when they saw the load on his sledge, and the women laughed aloud at the tearful Igluruk—they had long despised her in secret and now they let her see it and delighted in her misfortune. It was not the fact that she lived with the white man or had deserted Sakhawachiak that brought down the women's contempt on her—they did not consider such things contemptible—it was her incapacity and her present cowardice that they despised. It was easy to see that her father had been a white man, she showed that in everything, both inside and out; nothing good ever came from that race except flour and sugar and gay-coloured cloth.

The lashings of the sledge creaked as Joe started it with a crack of the whip; the dogs sprang forward in the tracks and the heavy

sledge swayed from side to side as it went off along the shore with the hysterical Igluruk on the top of the load and the terrified Joe at the side.

Sakhawachiak came next day. He was expected; and when an Eskimo saw a sledge coming over the ridge and drawing near at furious speed, he called out, "Sakhawachiak is coming!"

That ringing shout had a rousing effect on the Eskimos. One man after another took it up and sent it on; in a few moments the cry resounded all over the settlement—"Sakhawachiak is coming!"—and from the ice, from their huts and working places the Eskimos came running up; they wanted to be there when he settled accounts with the white men, or rather, the white man, for Jim Hacklet was alone.

Rapidly Sakhawachiak drew near over the hard-trodden trail—yes, it was he—they all knew the tall, slim figure standing on the sledge with a spear in one hand and the cracking whip in the other. The hood of his anorak had blown off his head and his long hair waved freely in the wind. He stood leaning a little forward, with his legs apart to keep his balance; he looked like his old self in his days of prosperity when he used to stand in the bow of his umiak and lead his men to battle with the whale.

100 Frozen Justice

But then his eyes had been cool and calm, not restless as they were now—they huddled together, his friends of old times, as he drove in among them and leapt off the sledge; his eyes boded no good to any one who might cross him.

He looked around the circle of faces with a sharp and rapid glance, but without seeing those he had hoped to find; and at once he became calmer. He looked about again to find a friend, but found only a circle of dark, serious faces, without a smile on one of them. . . . Was it his old authority as the best hunter of the settlement, or was it perhaps the pain they could so clearly read in his face, that had made the whole assemblage serious, silent, sympathetic towards the man who had once been so powerful?

He opened his mouth once or twice as though to speak, but closed it again; then at last he got out the words: “Where is Igluruk?”

Nobody answered, none cared to risk the enraged man’s unconsidered vengeance. They had heard of Uyarak’s death—and they looked down, every one of them—nobody daring to utter the word—gone!

“Can’t you hear?” he repeated slowly and clearly, the wild look coming back into his eyes—“can’t you hear?—where is Igluruk?—and Black Joe—are they still here?”

Still no answer, but now Sakhawachiak’s rage

flared up; he seized the nearest man and shook him: "Answer me, where's Igluruk?—where's Black Joe?"

"Gone," stammered the man, wrenching himself free of Sakhawachiak's grip—"gone yesterday, to the south."

The certainty had a paralysing effect on Sakhawachiak, and a sense of total powerlessness overcame him—after all his furious driving, his violent exertions to reach Nuwuk before the white man could take alarm, he had arrived too late. Black Joe had escaped his grasp and eluded his vengeance for the moment—but he could still be reached, he could not be far away—he must be off at once.

He turned to go, without a question, without saying a word; when suddenly he heard a scornful laugh close beside him—he recognized it, turned sharply on his heel—and looked right into Jim Hacklet's mocking eyes.

"Well," said Jim; "have you come back at last? you were pretty long about that hunting, weren't you?—but, good Lord, man, what a sight you look! It's a good thing Igluruk's not here—I bet she wouldn't have known you—no, she chose a better-looking man when she went off with Black Joe!"

He did not get out any more, for with one bound Sakhawachiak was upon his white enemy;

102 Frozen Justice

he gripped his throat, trying to throttle him, and together they fell to the ground.

Jim Hacklet was strong, but Sakhawachiak's choking grip nearly took his strength away; he twisted and writhed to get free, but Sakhawachiak held fast and pounded his head with his free hand.

Jim was nearly done—when he succeeded in turning over till he could get an arm up above Sakhawachiak's neck. Then he forced Sakhawachiak's chin down against his forehead, bent his adversary's head right back and pressed—pressed hard—an unendurable hold.

That saved him. Sakhawachiak could not keep his grip on Jim's throat, but let go; and breathing heavily the two rolled over and over in the snow, while the Eskimos stood looking on, silent and serious, without helping either—the past and the present must fight out their battle alone.

Jim Hacklet was strong, but Sakhawachiak was stronger, and the white man would have got the worst of it in an honourable fight, man to man. But Jim knew nothing about honour, either in trading or fighting—a knife would settle the issue, and a knife he would use—he summoned all his strength, all his suppleness, so as to give a sudden jerk and so far shake off the furious Eskimo that he could draw his sheath-knife, which hung at his hip.

He managed it—the bright knife flashed in the

sun—once, twice—then Sakhawachiak's hold relaxed—his right arm felt limp and heavy. Jim wrenched himself free and jumped up, bloody and knocked about, but victorious. Once more the white man had the upper hand!

He went up to his hut without troubling about Sakhawachiak, whom he left sitting on the bloody, trampled snow of the shore, holding his right arm, which had received two deep knife wounds. Jim had intended to stab his enemy and get rid of him once for all, but only succeeded in giving him wounds which would keep him quiet for a few days. Soon Sakhawachiak would be ready to resume the fight with his white enemy and carry it through to the bitter end.

Sakhawachiak was hard put to it to get dogs in Nuwuk—nobody dared to let him have so much as a single animal, for Jim Hacklet had forbidden it and threatened any one who helped the former chief with the white men's persecution—not for a month, not for a year, but for life, always and everywhere. And they knew that this was no empty threat; the white men could do it if they chose—so much had the Eskimos learnt.

Sakhawachiak asked all his former comrades for dogs, but in vain; and then tried to take by force what he could not get by fair means—but here again he came up against the white man's power; for Jim Hacklet, without showing him-

104 Frozen Justice

self, as he had no wish to expose himself to another meeting with Sakhawachiak, had given orders to collect the dogs, to keep a watch over them, and to strike down Sakhawachiak if he came near.

So he was powerless, but nevertheless he started off as soon as his wounds were more or less healed; hatred of the whites and of Igluruk drove him out on the perilous pursuit—without dogs, without sledge, with only a pack on his back. As for sitting idly in his old hut—which had been Igluruk's home—that only inflamed his passions even more acutely than when he was flying along the trail from Kugerakuk to Nuwuk. Then his hatred was actually for Black Joe alone—but now his feeling against Igluruk increased with every minute. He went over in his mind all that she had said and done during the past winter and began to see that she was not the woman he had believed her to be—she must have been casting eyes on Black Joe and perhaps the fault was not his alone—his hatred of Black Joe had not abated, but he swore that Igluruk should not escape either.

And one morning, seven days after Black Joe had driven off with Igluruk on his sledge, Sakhawachiak left Nuwuk—the pursuit began again. Now he knew where to find the pair—right in front of him on the southward trail—he had only

to go on, for days, weeks or months at a stretch —to keep on and never give up, however far the pursuit might lead him. Vengeance he would have, there was no rest for him till then; only blood could quench the violent agitation of his mind; the only thing was to hold on—sooner or later his vengeance would be accomplished.

VI

BLACK JOE and Igluruk had reached Icy Cape, where they sat in a white man's house telling the story of their troubled journey.

He sat at the table with the white men of the place, drinking—*she* sat on the floor with the white strangers' women. These women never said a word, but they kept their eyes fixed on the faces of their lords, for they had learnt what Igluruk in spite of all had not yet grasped—that to be a white man's woman was not always easy. For white men demand unconditional obedience from their women: the woman is a servant, nothing more, and must be ready to carry out the least wish of her master.

And so, taught by experience, four pairs of bright eyes kept watch on the white men's movements; they looked at the little smoking lamp which stood in the middle of the table casting a yellowish light upon ruddy, bearded faces; they looked at the array of bottles and jugs, plates and remains of food, and the more experienced of

the women shuddered to think of the night—a drunken white man was not easy to please, as a big scar on the forehead of one of the women bore witness. It had been done by a bottle thrown by her man in a drunken fit, which had broken on her forehead, leaving a big gaping wound and an injured eye.

And the women grew more and more silent as the bottle went round, but as yet there was no immediate danger—the men laughed and banged the table, they were enjoying Black Joe's story immensely.

He had calmed down at last. All those miles of sledging from Nuwuk to Icy Cape had lulled his fears; he could no longer understand his terror of Sakhawachiak and even had some thoughts of returning. "After all he's only a nigger," he said to the other three with a laugh; "what's it matter if I take his woman? we're whites and can do what we like."

His companions agreed. "Yes, we're whites and masters of the country—he ought to be proud of having a woman pretty enough for us to care to touch her. I took that woman there from a young fellow," said Tom, the one who had thrown the bottle, pointing to his damaged female—"but I didn't clear out; I stayed where I was and just promised the fellow grub and gear in exchange. Now he's going about the settlement here work-

108 Frozen Justice

ing for me—he's taken another woman—we're none the worse friends for it."

"Yes," said Joe, smiling rather shamefacedly; "that's how it ought to be—but Sakhawachiak isn't like the other Eskimos, you know that well enough. He's not going to be satisfied with grub and gear and another woman—no, he's more white than any other Eskimo on the whole coast and feels pretty much as we do. And it's a shame the way skippers of the fleet have always buttered him up and spoilt him— Devil take him and Igluruk, I wish I'd never collared the girl!"

"Well den, gif her back," one of the others interjected; he was a German who had lived many years at Icy Cape; Fritz they called him—"leddim haf de girl back, she ain't none de worse. Vat's it matter to him if you've had her a month or so. Down here the men are proud ven we take their women—and we take many—" he added with a grin.

"Yes, but Sakhawachiak—" Joe interrupted.

"Oh, you and your Sakhawachiak," wheezed Fritz—"one should tink you vas afraid of him. Vat kind of a feller is he anyway, that you vant to treat him different from the rest of the crowd? No, you're to soft up at Nuwuk—I don't know Jim Hacklet, but bust me if I understand vy you run away and gif him your share of two years' hunting. I guess he's more of a man than you,

Joe—he don’t run, he ain’t afraid; vy didn’t you let him manage dis job for you? I bet Jim can shoot and shoot straight—he can arrange der ting mit Sakhawachiak, or if he don’t he’ll put a bullet in his head.”

“Yes, you can talk,” said Joe, who was writhing under the sneers of the others; “but you only know the man by hearsay, you don’t know what a big guy he is at Nuwuk—why, he might have set the whole population on to us—and we were only two.”

“Yes, and now dere’s only von,” Fritz put in; “but vat of it, Joe? two vites with good modern rifles can stand up against a crowd of natives, eh? Anyway, Jim’s alone now, it’s shust twice so bad for him; but you watch him now, you see if he don’t come out all right!”

“Oh, stop that wrangling,” Tom interposed as peacemaker; “you’re always kicking up a fuss, Fritz. We’ve been sitting alone here all the winter, and now comes Joe, bless him, with a whole bundle of news, not to mention a pretty girl in tow—a sight prettier than any of our old squaws,” he added, his eyes straying amorously to Igluruk —“we ought to be glad, we ought to have put up a triumphal arch over the bridal pair—but what are we doing? Instead of rejoicing you start ragging the man and letting him have it as though it was your girl he’d lifted. No, you tell us a bit

110 Frozen Justice

about the journey, Joe, I guess it wasn't too slow—wish she'd chosen me for the trip."

"Oh, do you?" Joe answered with a rather tired smile. "Well, I dare say. But I can tell you one thing—if you'd driven her all the way from Nuwuk here you wouldn't be so keen on her company—no, you'd unload her on the way, after her. . . ."

"Why, good Lord almighty, Joe, what are you saying?" Tom laughed, half scared at the idea. "Unload her on the way—no, thanks all the same, not here anyway, we've got trouble enough without her. And what's more, we might have that crazy guy Sakhawachiak here raising hell—no, Joe, if that's your idea, think again; it don't go, nice girl as she is."

"Why can't you let me have my say?" snapped Joe, getting surly. "First you want to make me out a fool, then you ask me for my story, and as soon as I start telling it, you chip in and make a fuss. Who said I wanted to leave Igluruk behind with you? Can't you let a man say a word without jumping on him?"

"He's right," said the third man, an American like Tom; Richard was his name—"let Joe tell his story in peace. Light your pipes and see if you can't keep quiet till he's done—you can scrap afterwards if need be, turn the house upside down if you like, but remember, Joe's our guest. Go

ahead, Joe, tell us some more about Igluruk. She don't seem to show her best side on a sledge journey, according to what you were saying."

"No, by God she don't," said Joe with conviction—"and I can thank Sakhawachiak for that. He's never had her out of Nuwuk—she was to be spared all the trouble of travelling—so it was me that had the pleasure of breaking her in. And the woman won't work; she likes to sit on the sledge and shout at the dogs, but as for making herself useful—never had an idea of it. I had to sweat all day like a horse with that blasted sledge; I've worked till my limbs ached and felt like lead when I camped after a day's sledging. And d'you think she helped me then? —not on your life! I had to take the dogs out, pitch the tent, unload the sledge and carry everything in—and often enough I had to cook too," Joe sighed—"she said she was too tired."

Fritz sat staring at Joe in amazement while he told his story, casting angry glances at Igluruk, but now he could contain himself no longer. "Oh, look here, Joe," he began earnestly, clinking glasses with him; "I'm real sorry for you, that's sure; but believe me, it's your own fault. You don't treat women the right way. Shust you let me cure her of them funny ideas, shall I? It's so easy—" and Fritz thumped the table, making the bottles and glasses jump.

112 Frozen Justice

"No you shan't," said Joe roughly; "that's my business. But she was exhausting to travel with, that's sure, especially at the start. Then she was awful scared of Sakhawachiak and would start up from her sleep at night with a screech, catch hold of me and shake me till I woke, and it was 'Joe, come on, Joe, let's get on, I believe Sakhawachiak's coming'!"

"And so then you trotted on?" asked Tom with a smile. "You were a bit scared yourself and started sledgeing in the middle of the night—eh, Joe, didn't you?"

"Sometimes," rejoined Joe quietly; "sometimes. But tell me this, you fellows—have you ever tried what it's like to have death following your sledge? Is there any one of you that knows how it would feel to have a man suddenly creeping up to your tent with a spear and sticking it—sticking it into everything that moved inside, until it didn't move any more? Have you ever thought about that?—or have you ever been out on the ice, alone at night, and suddenly had the feeling that there was somebody or something coming stealthily behind you? Haven't you heard the ice crack so that it sounded like footsteps—have you never felt a vague terror for some unknown danger, and looked round at every step, and walked faster and faster till you break into a run, and run—and run, faster and faster, looking

back in fear of something that may be hiding behind the nearest hummock—a man or a bear or something supernatural—it doesn't matter what, but something that can harm you, something you're afraid to meet?"

None of the three said a word; they were thinking of lonely journeys with fear as their only companion. Yes, they knew the feeling, that nameless terror that suddenly comes over one when walking alone in the desert of ice—they began to understand Joe; they could imagine that he had gone through some terrible hours, especially at night.

"But why didn't you force her to keep quiet? Why didn't you gag her, so that you didn't hear her shrieking?"

"No," said Joe, "I could make her keep quiet all right—outwardly—and I did it more than once. But that was worse than her shrieking—it was as if she was shrieking inwardly with fright—and then I began to wonder if she had second sight and could see something coming. You know, lots of the natives have it—I thought, perhaps she was trying to warn me—I couldn't stand it, had to talk to her. . . . No," said Joe, shaking his head, "you bet your life, it was a tough time.

"And then, when we got started again"—Joe went on—"and had gone a few miles, she calmed

down and didn't holler any more. She might even get quite lively, laughing and clapping her hands and telling me what a dandy dog-puncher I was. Sometimes she would be so happy and cuddle up close to me, when we had to stop and rest the dogs, telling me she wasn't a bit afraid any more—‘No,’ she would say, ‘as long as you're with me it's all right’—and then she would put her arms round my neck and look at me—ooh!—” Joe's feelings overcame him—“like—well, I don't know how to tell you—you know how I mean. . . .”

“Well, I'm darned if you ain't a nice pair,” laughed Richard—“you're a plucky couple to be out on the trail.— But what happened then? you don't tell me you kept up that love-making all day?—ugh, in that cold!” he added with a shiver.

“No,” Joe admitted; “as a rule it wasn't long before things went wrong again. Oh, you bet it was a gay time—at night she hollered for fear of Sakhawachiak—and in the daytime because I drove too fast and got her tired. She would sit up on top of the load and cry quietly, trying to get me to stop; and if that didn't work, she howled out loud and started scolding—said there was no sense in driving like that, Sakhawachiak couldn't catch us up, p'raps he wasn't even following us—it was only our own fear that was driving us—come, let's camp!”

"And what then?" asked Fritz, bewildered.

"What then?" Joe gave a stupid grin—"why then we camped, if there wasn't a house near. You don't suppose I could trail all over the country with that creature howling like mad; besides I didn't think myself there was any particular reason to drive so cursed fast."

The three others whistled and looked at each other. Crazy, their eyes said, with a laugh—clean crazy—all for an Eskimo bit of goods.—"What next, Joe? go on."

And Joe told all about his troubles on the journey, about Igluruk's waywardness, about the blamed uneven ice and the masses of soft snow. He told about blizzards so heavy and cutting that sledging was impossible against the wind and driving snow; he told of lashings that had to be repaired with the thermometer forty below, of dogs that gave up, of Eskimos he had met on the trail. He laughed till he choked at the thought.

"Do you know what I said to all the Eskimos I met?" he asked his companions. "I told them Sakhawachiak had gone mad, and that he was coming along on a sledge and would demand food and dogs. But they'd have to look out, I told them, because this madness of his was catching—if only the madman caught their eyes and looked into them, they'd go mad themselves—and if they gave him grub or dogs or sledges or helped

116 Frozen Justice

him at all they'd be clean done for. They'd have to keep him away from their houses and settlements, throw stones at him, and if he kept coming near, they were to shoot him, if they had any gun—that was the safest; but if they hadn't any, a harpoon was not so bad.

"You bet he'll have a cheerful journey," Joe went on—"I've made it nice and hot for him—there isn't a single Eskimo between Icy Cape and Nuwuk that'll help him, you can be sure of that."

This was something his mates could understand; they laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks: "Joe, old man, you may not be a hero, but blame me if you ain't cute."

Igluruk and Black Joe stayed some days with the white men—they felt there was safety in numbers. But one day a sledge arrived from the north, and Tom met the man just as he was driving into the settlement. He brought him along to the white men's house.— "Mates, here's news for you!"

The man had been sent off by Jim Hacklet with an express message for Black Joe. "Get on as fast as you can," ran the message,— "keep on driving, don't stop on the way, don't rest any longer than you have to, keep on all the time till you reach white men's towns—and don't ever think of coming back to Nuwuk—it's as

much as your life is worth." And the messenger reported about Sakhawachiak's arrival like a madman, how he had nearly strangled Jim Hacklet and had himself been wounded by Jim's knife. He told of the incredibly short time Sakhawachiak took to come from the Kugerakuk to Nuwuk, and gave the report which had rapidly spread through the settlement—that Sakhawachiak had harpooned Uyarak when he brought the news about Igluruk and Black Joe to the snow town on the Kugerakuk.

There was silence in the white men's house when the messenger had finished—the three men exchanged looks and understood now why Joe had cleared out; they nodded silently, as much as to say: "Well, after all we might have done the same as Black Joe"—and then they looked at him, sitting there as before, with his head resting on his left hand. His face was pale, white as chalk, his eyes were uncannily dark and staring; with his finger he was tracing something in the whisky spilt on the table. *Sakhawachiak* he wrote, nothing else, just *Sakhawachiak*—but that was enough; with a sigh he dropped his head on his arm and groaned in his terror: God, if he came!—the terrible avenger, like Fate itself—what was he to do, what could he do?

Get on—yes of course he must get on, there was nothing else for it; but then the weary work

118 Frozen Justice

would begin again, the anxious nights with broken sleep, the hurried starts with Igluruk shrieking, the everlasting struggle by the side of the sledge in storm and snow, the many, many days without rest, the wearing life of the trail without peace or quiet—oh Igluruk, would that I had left Sakhawachiak keep you! you were fair and your embraces were sweet, but God in heaven what a price to pay!

Thus thought Joe, as he lay half across the table with his head on his arm; he did not hear the reassuring words of his mates, nor even the howls of Igluruk; he thought only of death and seemed to feel its clammy fingers on his throat. He noticed nothing—not even when Fritz sprang up, seized Igluruk by the shoulder and dragged her outside the hut. “Damn the woman! I gif you som ding to cry for,” the German hissed between his teeth—“if your man don’t behandle you properly, then must I—take that!—and be quiet, or I’ll kill you!” And the blows of his stick fell mercilessly upon the screaming woman’s back.

His companions were busy; with the help of the Eskimos they loaded Joe’s sledge and then went in to get some food ready. The smell of fried meat filled the room. “Grub’s ready, Joe, and if you’re a man, pull yourself together and eat. Your sledge is loaded, your dogs are rested; you

must drive to the south and keep on driving till you get far down into Alaska, to places where Sakhawachiak can't get at you. You were right, it's life or death for you—now drive for it!"

So once more Joe started off, with the weeping Igluruk trudging beside the sledge. The three dwellers at Icy Cape were glad to see them disappear among the hummocks to the south—only when they were gone could they shake off the uneasiness that had come over them all at the news of Sakhawachiak's having killed Uyarak, once the most dreaded man in Nuwuk.

VII

THE Eskimos of Nuwuk shook their heads when they saw Sahawachiak start off without dogs, without sledge, with only a little food on his back, and a rifle. It was not often he used the white man's arms—he had never yet fully trusted them—but now, in fighting the white men themselves, he had to use them. A spear was a good thing for hand-to-hand fighting; but he knew the whites well enough to realize that there was little likelihood of that. There would be shooting at long range, so a rifle was best for him too. But he had a spear with him all the same, and whenever he thought of the moment when at last he should have overtaken his enemy and could wreak his vengeance, he never imagined himself lying and taking aim from a distance—no, he would be close up, hand to hand, man to man. That was his hope, and his hands clenched convulsively—he longed for it and seemed to feel Joe's struggling body already under him; it gave him a malicious joy to think of that moment, when his hands could grasp Joe's throat and squeeze, squeeze—till his enemy's

movements grew weaker and weaker, till all resistance ceased and he could fling the lifeless, hated body from him.

But the rifle was safest after all, and with it on his back and the spear in his hand as a staff he left Nuwuk, which breathed more freely when it had seen the last of him.

Now running, now walking he made his way down the coast, where he knew every inch of the ground from former journeys. He knew where he would find the best going, and ran along the low flat sandhills, which just rose sufficiently high above the uneven shore ice for the wind to sweep the snow off them. There the going was good, and he ran all day long, ran to overtake the fugitive couple, ran to soothe his feelings, to find rest and peace from his gnawing thoughts.

On the first day the weather was fine, so Sakhawachiak had covered a good distance before darkness fell and compelled him to seek shelter in an iglo he knew of.

But Joe had been there, and when Sakhawachiak at last reached the hut, he found it empty. There was not a soul to be seen, nor a dog, but plenty of fresh tracks which told his practised eye what had happened. The occupants of the house had driven eastward, inland, quite a short while ago. Sakhawachiak was puzzled, he didn't understand it—why drive eastward and inland,

122 Frozen Justice

taking everything from inside and outside the iglo, so late in the day? What could it mean and where were they going?—they could not be far off, their tracks were quite fresh, and for a moment he thought of following them—he longed to meet countrymen so as to get news of Black Joe's flight, friends who could tell him when Joe had left there. But there was no one, and he soon gave up the idea of following—he crawled into the deserted hut, cooked a little food, and slept—slept as only a man can whose day's work has been a run of forty miles.

Next day it was blowing a gale from the northward and the snow was whirling high when Sak-hawachiak resumed his run down the coast. He tried running on the sand dunes, as on the previous day, but could not manage it in the furious gale—no snow lay there and the sand-banks were coated with a thin layer of slippery ice—when a gust came he slid away and could not keep his feet.

It wouldn't do, it was too dangerous; so he went down to the shore, to the sea ice, where he could find foot-hold. The wind whistled and whirled clouds of snow over the lonely wanderer; he staggered and swayed in the tremendous gusts of wind and tried, often in vain, to keep his balance. But what did a fall matter?—he could

always get up again and run, keep on running, till he had another fall.

The wind shrieked louder, it howled and growled around him; the sky was dark and overcast; the sun was gone, there were no shadows. The ice looked perfectly flat, every unevenness vanished in the bad light, and Sakhawachiak stumbled on blindly, falling into deep holes or over big blocks of ice. Then he tried further out, away from the hummocky shore ice, found some big even floes and ran on; but the snow was soft, he sank deep into it—to the knees, often deeper; it was impossible to make headway. Then back to land, and thus, knocked about, confused, blinded by the snow and blown forward by the wind, he hurried on southward with his rifle on his back and his spear in his hand, ready to kill at sight.

He could go no further, had to seek shelter; and at last he found a trail, followed it, and presently stood outside an iglo, half blotted out by the driving snow.

He knocked the worst of the snow off his clothes and crawled through the long passage into the iglo, thrust aside the skin curtain—the door—and saw nine or ten men and women sitting inside in the warm room.

They all turned towards the opening and there

saw a stranger covered with snow. Of his face only a glimpse here and there could be seen; there was ice in his hair and his eyebrows were covered with it; even the eyelashes hung heavy with little beads of ice at the ends. The lower part of his face was hidden by the anorak, which was frozen to ice; there was ice all over him, only his eyes were free—black and sparkling as they looked into the hut.

“Come in, stranger,” said the one who sat nearest; but the invitation was superfluous, for Sakhawachiak was already standing in the middle of the iglo, thawing his frozen anorak with his hands, at the same time breaking big pieces of ice off the few hairs of his beard. It was ugly weather outside.

“Who are you?” one of them asked.

“Sakhawachiak—from Nuwuk,” came the answer slowly.

“Sakhawachiak! . . .”

They looked at each other, these half-naked inmates of the iglo, and turned away. What was it the white man had said? Sakhawachiak was mad, he had told them, and they would all go mad if he looked them in the eyes; they would be completely done for if they gave him dogs or food or helped him in any way.

Silence fell on the hut—all turned their backs to Sakhawachiak, who had now dragged off most

of his clothing and beaten the ice and snow out of it; then he asked: "Have you seen anything of Black Joe and—Igluruk?"

Nobody answered; in silence they all sat with their backs turned to the unwelcome guest. Mad, the white man had said he was—and they had scarcely believed it; but a man must be mad to be travelling in such weather without dogs or sledge, they could all understand that.

"Can't you hear? I asked about Joe—when was he here?"

Not a sound in reply; the whole lot of them sat still, glancing at each other in a frightened way and scarcely daring to breathe.

Sakhawachiak got angry—he jumped up and addressed one of the inmates of the house whom he knew because he had often been at Nuwuk: "You, Kreeseek, why don't you answer? What's wrong? I asked about Joe and Igluruk!"

Kreeseek got frightened and began to speak with his back still turned to Sakhawachiak. "Joe said you were mad. Joe said we should go mad if we helped you. You'd better go away—what do you want here?"

"Food," said Sakhawachiak—"and rest. It's stormy outside; I've come here from Nuwuk without dogs or sledge, I can't hold out any longer. But don't believe what Joe says," he continued; "don't believe the white man. I believed him

126 Frozen Justice

once—he took my woman while I was away—now I'm after them, I'm going to kill them—I won't do you any harm, but food I must have, and if you won't give it me I'll take it myself."

Sakhawachiak had not expected this reception. He understood now why he had found the last iglo empty—its inmates had seen him coming and had fled in time; but here he had taken them unawares—they could not escape.

They consulted—still with their backs to the unbidden guest. What shall we do?—of course it's the act of a madman to be out in such weather, especially without sledge or dogs and so far from Nuwuk—but he is one of our own people and doesn't behave like a madman in other ways. We can't let him go—and who knows whether we could even get him out of the iglo? Better humour him—the oldest woman is anyhow so old that she must soon die; she'll have to risk it and cook some food for Sakhawachiak.

And so it was settled. She was accustomed to obey and accepted her fate. She got some food ready for Sakhawachiak and mended his torn clothing—but she did not look at him. It is dangerous to look at one who is possessed of evil spirits; she had to help him—the others ordered her—but no power on earth could make her look at the madman, and she trembled, poor

old soul, so that she could scarcely hold her needle and thread.

Sakhawachiak made his meal in silence—in silence all the people of the iglo sat with their naked, glistening backs turned towards him as he ate; and long after he had finished he sat still, pondering the white men's malice. They took his woman, fled the country with her, and when he wanted to avenge his wrong and pursue the pair, they proclaimed him mad to every one they met;—accursed whites, there were no bounds to their infamy!

He made one more attempt to learn something of the flight of Black Joe and Igluruk. "Friends," he said, addressing the naked backs, "the white man has told you I am mad, to stop you from helping me—but mad I am not. I should like to have dogs and a sledge, though I can get on without them, but one thing I *will* know—when was Black Joe here?"

They whispered among themselves—it wasn't their fault that he had got into the iglo—he was there before they knew what was happening, and there he sat just behind them with his spear in his hand. They were unarmed—all their spears lay outside the door in the long passage—and if they didn't answer him there was a risk that he would use force. For they had heard

128 Frozen Justice

about the killing of Uyarak—the man was dangerous. “Kreeseek, you have spoken to him once, you speak again; there’s no reason why the rest of us should go mad.”

Kreeseek was unwilling, but Sakhawachiak pressed for an answer. They huddled together, all the naked folk, and unconsciously talked aloud about the thing that Sakhawachiak most wanted to know.—“Well now, when was it he came?—it was before the great storm, just about evening five days ago.”

So now he knew it, and they huddled together happily—nobody could hinder them from talking to each other, and if Sakhawachiak was in the hut of course he could listen—it was easier to evade the stern prohibition than they had imagined.

“Five days ago,” repeated Sakhawachiak, counting up; “I left Nuwuk seven days behind the others—if I can keep up this pace I must soon catch them—perhaps at Icy Cape. . . . How were they driving?” he asked the naked backs.

“Ah, how was it?” the Eskimos began. Wasn’t she sitting on top of the load when they came?”—“No, she was walking at the side”—this was another voice joining in—” and she was so tired, so fearfully tired, she fell asleep as soon as she came inside the iglo—”

“And left me to mend the white man’s clothes,”

interposed one of the women. "She slept so soundly that we could scarcely wake her when the food was ready—and then she screamed when I touched her."

"She screamed in the night too," the backs continued the conversation among themselves—"and next morning she wanted to be off long before the sledge was ready."

Sakhawachiak listened with interest. "How did Joe treat her?" he muttered half aloud, while the Eskimos listened to hear what was coming next.

"Yes, how did Joe treat her?" asked one of the men, and the women hastened to answer. "Oh, he was kind enough to her and did her work as well as his own—she couldn't do anything."

"How many dogs were there in the sledge?" Sakhawachiak asked into the air.

"How many dogs had Joe?" repeated the man who was leading this curious conversation, and two or three of his housemates answered: "He had eleven fine, strong dogs; and he wanted them too—the load was heavy."

"Then he could not drive very fast?" Sakhawachiack continued his conversation with the backs.

"Fast? well . . . how fast did he drive?" one of the men asked the other Eskimos.

130 Frozen Justice

"We don't know," was the answer; "he was driving slowly when he got here; the dogs were tired. But Kreepok went with him from here to help with the sledge, so he must have driven faster to Icy Cape."

"So Kreepok went with him," muttered Sakhawachiak thoughtfully, and the conversation died away. He had found out what he wanted to know; but after a while he began again: "I wonder whether I can get dogs here—and a sledge?"

"Can he get dogs and a sledge?" the question was repeated at random among the crowd of Eskimos—and for a long time there was silence. "I have none," answered one. "Nor I," another hastened to add. "No, he can't have any dogs and sledge," answered the chorus, and again there was silence.

For a long time there was not a sound to be heard but the heavy breathing of the Eskimos. "I am going to sleep," Sakhawachiak broke the silence. "I shall lie here by the door, and tomorrow morning I shall go on. But don't dare to disturb me tonight—you are not to believe the white men and obey them—they are liars. I am not mad, but I am going to kill Black Joe and Igluruk; that is my right, that doesn't concern you. But if you hinder me, it will be the worse for you."

Nobody answered that, nor was answer needed, and soon they were all asleep in the little iglo—the travel-worn Sakhawachiak by the door, the others sitting with their backs turned to the dangerous man—only the worn-out old woman was awake, mending Sakhawachiak's clothes with hurried stitches and getting ready his food for the morning.

His heart was bitter within him when he resumed the pursuit, and his hatred of the white man increased as he went along the coast, a lonely man, without sledge or dogs, with only a little food on his back, and his rifle. He carried his spear in his hand and used it as a staff while he toiled onward along the shore towards Icy Cape.

Two days later he came upon sledge-tracks. He examined them carefully: two sharp runners had cut deep marks in the snow and beside them he saw the footprints of two men, who had apparently been working hard—the toes were dug deep into the snow at each step—and he smiled. A heavy load, he thought—they're working hard, those two, and getting on slowly; I shall soon catch them. And he continued on his way, half walking, half running, keeping between the sharp tracks which encouraged him to hurry on—perhaps I shall catch them tomorrow, perhaps the next day—and then I can turn back.

He gave a start a little farther along the

132 Frozen Justice

trail. Here they halted, he muttered—and here—he noticed a third set of footprints—here Igluruk got off. He examined the tracks closely—yes, that was Igluruk, and she had been cold, she had run up and down to warm herself—so the white man did not ill-treat her or make her work. But oh, Igluruk, how could you leave me and go over to the whites? You used always to be well off, but now . . . and he sat down, this lonely, forsaken man, forgot his persecution and his hate, and thought only of his vanished peace, of the many happy years at Nuwuk before the whites had settled there. Curse the white men! they had destroyed everything; the country was no longer the same, they brought in whisky and disease, want and misery . . . and with an outburst of hatred he sprang up and ran along the trail, like a beast of prey that has just scented its quarry.

The coast he followed was uninhabited, but low and flat as at Nuwuk; it was often hard to decide whether he was on land or ice. But this did not matter to him; he trotted on; the weather was fine, the snow hard, he made good progress and hoped soon to have a sight of the fugitives.

At night he dug himself into the snow and lay warm and comfortable; but next morning he was away again—his hate gave him neither rest nor peace.

And so he came to Icy Cape . . . but the settlement is a large one, many Eskimos live there and they travel far afield; several of them had seen him and had driven home with the news —“Sakhawachiak is coming!”

He was expected, and the white men had laid their plans well. The madman’s coming—was the cry over the whole settlement—keep him away from your iglos, don’t look at him; remember, if we talk to him we shall go mad. What does he want? Black Joe and Igluruk left yesterday—let him go on, we don’t want him here!—Thus spoke all the skin-clad folk, but they could not help admiring the endurance he had shown in coming all the way from Nuwuk without sledge or dogs, with only the food on his back; and they collected in groups to watch the lonely man advancing over the ice from the north. In spite of all they felt almost proud of him, the great traveller, their own countryman—but the man was mad, the whites had said so, and had further outlawed him by forbidding the natives to have anything whatever to do with him. The prohibition would be observed, that was sure enough, for the white men had threatened any one who helped him with perpetual persecution: never again would he be able to buy flour or treacle, coffee or tea, certainly not tobacco. And not only would the man who helped Sakhawachiak

be hit by the white men's persecution—his whole family would suffer, father and mother, wife and children, all who were related to him would be ostracized.

Such precautions had the white men taken; they knew that every man and woman in the settlement would keep an eye on their relations, lest they themselves should innocently be involved in the threatened punishment.

But Sakhawachiak was coming nearer; he saw the disturbance caused by his approach, and it pained him; but he grasped his rifle tighter—could Black Joe be there still?

The three whites met him on the shore and barred his way, each with a rifle in his hand.

"Who are you?" asked Tom, for the sake of saying something, when Sakhawachiak halted near them.

"Sakhawachiak," he answered; "from Nuwuk. I've come to look for Black Joe and my woman—Igluruk."

"They're not here," answered Tom; "they've been gone a long time. Turn back, man; you'll never reach them."

"When did they leave?" asked Sakhawachiak.

"I said, a long time ago and you'll never reach them. Black Joe is somewhere down by Point Hope—give it up, you'll never overtake him."

They looked at him and understood Joe's ter-

ror. His eyes shone with an evil and determined look. "Look here," Sakhawachiak objected, "it can't be long since they left here; I have a pretty good idea as to that. More than three days it can't be, and if they hadn't been helped by white men they'd have been dead long ago. You may as well tell me; I'm not going to give up the pursuit, even if it's a week since they left here. I shall keep on till I find them—they shan't fool me again!"

He made as though he would pass the white men, but they barred his way. "You're not coming into the settlement. We don't mean you any harm; this here's Joe's affair—but we're not going to help you, you won't find out anything from us. If you want to go on—why, go on; but for your own sake we advise you to turn and go back to Nuwuk. If you do that you shall have dogs and a sledge and as much grub as you want—but not if you go south."

Sakhawachiak knew that the white men kept their word when they threatened—he had learnt that long ago. He sat down on a piece of ice and thought. . . . Should he shoot them, these cursed whites? should he try to force his way in or should he turn aside?

His common sense said turn aside. He might shoot one white man, perhaps two, but the moment he raised his rifle the white men would

136 Frozen Justice

shoot him—and then Joe would go scot-free. No, it was Joe he had to deal with, not these; it was not their fault that Joe came here, nor that he took Igluruk.

The white men gave him time to consider—after all it might be an awkward business killing a man, even if he was only an Eskimo. They were the only whites for many, many miles around, and even if they were now on top and had the natives scared of Sakhawachiak, there might come a day when they were on some sledge journey and alone with the natives. And you could never tell what the Eskimos had in their heads, they might remember Sakhawachiak if he had been killed, and their fear of him might turn into sympathy—no, it would be far better if he went away quietly—they had made up their minds about that long ago.

"Well, Sakhawachiak," said Tom at length; "are you going to turn back?"

He still sat motionless and only shook his head. "I am hungry; give me food and I'll go on at once."

But that they would not do, and at last he got up. "All right then, as you please. But I shall have more time when once Joe's dead—and then I'll come back. You're on top now, and I won't give up chasing Black Joe—but later on . . . !"

"Vat den?" snapped Fritz—"p'raps you kill

us too, eh? I tink it's best we shoot him straight away—" and he began to finger his rifle. But Sakhawachiak was ready; he swung round with his rifle at his hip, and Fritz calmed down again —couldn't tell which would get his shot in first.

Without saying a word more to the three Sakhawachiak went off. He did not turn round again, and was lost to sight among the ice-hummocks to the south. But the same night he came back while the whole settlement was asleep; knife in hand he crawled into a hut and roused the occupants: "Give me food—give me dogs, or I'll knife you."

That was language the natives understood, and they could read in his eyes that it was no empty threat; so he got food, dogs and a sledge—and then the pursuit of Black Joe began again: he lashed the dogs and drove them on, away from Icy Cape, down the coast after his enemy.

He drove for a couple of days and all went well, if not so rapidly as he had hoped; but then came a storm—howling and crashing it tore across the country from the southward, driving every living thing to seek shelter. The fox had still under the lee of an ice-block and let itself be snowed under—but Sakhawachiak kept on; he bid long since crept into its hole, and the bear lay defiance to the wind and drove his dogs forward in the teeth of the cutting snowstorm. Their

138 Frozen Justice

eyes were blinded by the snow, great cakes of ice and snow covered their heads, but still he urged them on, encouraging them with shouts and using his whip—on he must go, on after his enemy—and the dogs had to suffer for the white man's sins.

He himself was in bad case, but took no notice of the snow that filled his eyes nor of his big frostbites; he leaned forward against the wind, bent his head low and kept on, kept on until the dogs threw themselves into the snow and refused to go any farther.

Then he dug himself into the snow to wait for better weather. He had no fire to cook his food, so he ate it raw and then fell asleep, slept calmly and securely, yet like the beasts of the field—with his senses awake, ready to spring up and begin again as soon as the wind abated.

He was held up a long time, but at last he was able to start; and, although the gale howled and the snow whirled high, the weather had cleared just enough for him to drive the dogs forward against the driving snow, while he himself, bent double, fighting the wind, walked beside the sledge—soon he must surely catch the runaways.

The weather improved and day after day he drove southward along a coast so barren and forsaken that its bleak cheerlessness depressed

even him. But he was on the track of the fugitives and passed place after place where Igluruk and Black Joe had camped or rested—he was overhauling them, quickly too, the trail was getting fresher. He whipped up the dogs and drove on, with his rifle lying beside him on the sledge, ready for him to snatch it up and shoot at sight.

The country was getting higher. Steep mountains rose almost perpendicularly from the surface of the ice, dark and threatening, too steep even for the snow to lodge on their sheer sides. The wind came hurtling down from the mountains in furious gusts, but Sakhawachiak was no longer to be stopped and disregarded the violent squalls—he whipped up his dogs and drove close in under the cliff, along the smooth ice at its foot. His eyes never moved from the ice right ahead; every instant he expected to see a sledge in the distance, for now he knew that the fugitives were within his reach—he had just passed the last of Joe's camps, and they had left it quite recently, the ashes of the wood fire were still warm.

Now he had them—at the most it could only be a few hours before his vengeance was accomplished. Never would Black Joe and Igluruk reach Point Hope—*their* hope.

The warm ashes had given Sakhawachiak new strength, new life, which he tried to pass on to

his dogs; he stopped a while to give them a feed from his diminished store—there was no need to save now—and after a rest he drove the dogs on again. He ran by the side of the sledge, swinging his whip over the whimpering animals—but the rest had done them good, the food too; and though their feet were tender and they were worn-out and half-starved, they still ran on, driven by the will of a strong and determined man.

The outmost point, Cape Lisbourne, now came in sight. Loftly, dark and threatening it rose above the flat surface of the white ice, ever sombre, but now doubly so, as it lay before Sakhawachiak's eyes sharply outlined against the light spring sky.

Huge avalanches thundered down the steep cliffs and struck the ice with a thousand tons' force—smashed it, and sent small floes drifting away to leeward over the black, stormswept sea, out to the pack-ice a mile away.

The water was close to Sakhawachiak, deep black it looked; he saw it and the floes drifting off. He knew the danger of being carried out to sea on drifting ice, and knew it was certain death to him if that happened—but he paid no attention to it, never gave it a thought—his brain contained but one idea—forward, stick to it, faster, faster yet!

The whip swished over the dogs, and leaning forward he ran along the foot of the cliffs—then he straightened up with a jerk—stopped so suddenly that he slid on over the ice—what was that?—that dark spot over there on the ice, wasn't it a sledge—*the* sledge?

Standing stock still he gazed at the black dot that had come in sight off a promontory, almost by Cape Lisbourne. For some moments he stood there in suspense, strong and erect, letting the wind buffet and tear at his body, immovable save for his waving hair, which he held back with his hand so as to see better.

The dogs lay in front of the sledge, huddled together and keeping each other warm, without a movement, without a sound—nothing was to be heard but the whistling of the wind. Then Sakhawachiak drew a deep breath, seized his rifle from the sledge, bent forward and started off with a bound. He left the sledge where it was and had no ears for the whining of the dogs—uneasy at being alone. He ran—for the dark speck in front of him was moving; it was a sledge, and when the squalls had spent their force and the clouds of flying snow subsided, he saw two people beside the sledge—Igluruk and Black Joe.

He was overtaking them rapidly—still unseen; but suddenly one of the two figures beside the sledge stopped and turned round—only to rest,

142 Frozen Justice

only to recover breath, suspecting nothing wrong.

But what he saw shook him up badly.

Sakhawachiak could actually see the shudder that went through him at the sight he had long dreaded but hoped never to see—a man running to track him down!

He spun round like a flash—the man yonder—and ran. Sakhawachiak saw him swing his arm up and down, time after time, quickly. The flying man—or was it Igluruk?—had caught a glimpse of death in the brief instant he looked back, and whipped up his dogs like a madman, hoping once more to escape the terrible Thing that was approaching.

Sakhawachiak was overhauling the sledge, soon he would be up to it. But the fugitives were alive to the danger and stopped suddenly to throw out their load in feverish haste—then on again, on, on, lashing the dogs—their lives were at stake.

The fugitives had not given themselves time to empty the sledge altogether and it was still too heavy; they dared not stop again, but one of them jumped on to the sledge and threw the rest of the load out to right and left, while the other ran beside it and lashed the dogs. That did some good—the lightened sledge flew over the ice as fast as the dogs could run, and now Sakhawachiak was no longer gaining on them—but he

kept cool, for he knew that nobody could keep up that pace, especially when one of the two was a white.

Presently Sakhawachiak reached a heap of whalebone, furs and skins—everything that Black Joe had brought with him from Nuwuk lay scattered over the ice, but Sakhawachiak did not stop, he only smiled maliciously and ran on as a man only runs when the goal is in sight. But the empty sledge drove too quickly; it flew on, drawn by its eleven dogs lashed to fury by the mad terror of a man and a woman—he was no longer gaining on it.

Then came an uncanny rumbling, whistling and roaring from the mountains and a terrific squall burst down the slopes with a noise like thunder, tearing out great stones as it went. They fell, crashed against other rocks on the cliff, sprang out as though cast by invisible hands, fell on the ice with a crash—and then hell broke loose. Sakhawachiak was caught by the sudden gust, which whirled the snow into the air around him—the fleeing sledge vanished in clouds of snow—and he himself was lifted up, whirled round and thrown down on the ice, and sent spinning away towards the open sea.

In vain he tried to catch hold of some unevenness with his hands, but he went spinning, spinning on towards the water, and death.

144 Frozen Justice

He pressed his body flat against the ice, to stop himself if possible, but slid on still . . . then he collided with an ice-block and lay still, just his own length from the water, which roared and seethed against the newly broken edge of the ice.

Sakhawachiak took a few moments to collect himself before crawling back towards land, in the teeth of the wind which still beat down over the mountains—and then discovered that his rifle was gone, lost while he was fighting for life against the wind.

So he had to return to the open water, and after some searching he found his rifle. This took time, but at any rate he had recovered the instrument of vengeance, and with the rifle slung on his back he crawled in again towards the land and safety.

The squall had spent its rage. It still roared among the mountains, and the ice wailed and sighed like a living creature beneath the pressure of the gale—but then it passed on, out to sea, to places where it could do no harm. The weather cleared, the driving snow sank slowly down—but rose again now and then when a lighter gust came along—then they too died away and all was still. The tops of hummocks rose above the driven snow, like islands in a chalk-white sea; then the white fell away, disappeared, and the

outlines of the ice stood out clear and sharp—and there, there was the sledge!

It had also been hit by the squall, but not so hard as Sakhawachiak. It had certainly skidded a little out of its course, but it was easier for the dogs to get foothold than for men and they had pulled the sledge up before it reached the open water. It had already started again—westward, in the direction of Cape Lisbourne—and two people were lashing the dogs on.

Squall followed squall, but now they did not take Sakhawachiak by surprise; he stood his ground, or threw himself down on hearing the gusts among the mountains—and he was gaining on the fugitives; the dogs could no longer keep up the furious pace.

Sakhawachiak ran—his heart hammered as if it would burst, his ears sang and his eyes were clouded, but he ran—ran as he had never run before, driven on by his hate, by his indomitable will and by his thirst for revenge—but now he was so near that he could plainly hear the fugitives' hoarse shouts to their dogs to run, run, run faster still.

The ice was broken around Cape Lisbourne, right in to the land, but stranded ice kept the pieces together, though there were often wide cracks between the separate floes. The sledge

146 Frozen Justice

flew across, the fugitives with it, and Sakhawachiak sprang after. Rapidly they were nearing Cape Lisbourne, in a few minutes the sledge would be far enough on to round the point—Sakhawachiak was not a thousand yards from it.

Then another squall burst; it rumbled down the mountainsides and the ice-floes rocked under the pressure of the wind, but both the sledge and Sakhawachiak were far enough under the lee of the land to escape the full force of the blast—the sledge dashed on and Sakhawachiak after it, drawing steadily nearer.

Then the sledge halted. The dogs collected in a bunch and refused to jump a wide lane which had evidently just opened—the work of the last squall.

It was the end of the chase—and Sakhawachiak slackened his pace to gather strength for the final bout—but still he rapidly drew near to the two, who were running up and down on the edge of the open water looking for the narrowest place.

Now he was near enough to distinguish both their faces: Joe's pale as a corpse, Igluruk's distorted by fear—there was not more than three hundred yards between them. Sakhawachiak dropped into a walk—there was no need to run now and he had another use for his strength; he enjoyed torturing them, playing with them,

watching their mad terror. *He* had been tortured, *he* had suffered, but now he was as calm and cool as at Nuwuk when he was hunting bear or seal and had his game where he wanted it to be—only one last thing remained—the easiest of all—to make these running, shrieking, terror-stricken creatures quiet for ever.

Then Igluruk jumped—as well drown as be shot. But at the same instant Sakhawachiak sank on his knee with his rifle to his cheek—his finger on the trigger and Black Joe on the sights—he should not fool him this time.

Like a flash the regret struck Sakhawachiak's brain, that Joe after all should get off with shooting—whereas he had gloated on the idea of squeezing the life out of him with his hands—and then the rifle cracked. The echo caught up the report and tossed it back, shot upon shot; the smoke cleared away and Sakhawachiak leapt up with a hoarse cry . . . he had trusted to the white men's weapon, but had been fooled by that as by everything else white. The bullet struck just behind Joe—who jumped, jumped for dear life and landed on the other side, driven to it by Sakhawachiak's shot.

And then they ran, those two, as fast as they could, along the ice-foot behind Cape Lisbourne, towards the south, towards Point Hope, their hope and deliverance; for when

148 Frozen Justice

Sakhawachiak reached the crack that had stopped Black Joe and Igluruk it had grown so wide that to jump it was impossible. The fugitives were saved and their pursuer was adrift on the floating ice, whence he sent bullet after bullet at random after the two who had hurt him so sorely. But the range was increasing, his bullets fell short—they ran on, those two on the firm ice-foot, unharmed, saved. And he, Sakhawachiak was drifting away from land—out to sea.

VIII

AS long as Sakhawachiak could see the fugitives he sat quite still on the ice looking after them. He did not feel the cold, nor recked of the open water, paralysed as he was by the knowledge that they had escaped him. He tried to collect his thoughts, but could not; they came slowly, heavily and with difficulty—it was all so incomprehensible.

A short while ago he had been so certain of catching them, the two who had stolen his peace and happiness—he had struggled so hard, had borne so much in order to reach them, and then—just as he had believed himself at the goal, he was farther from it than ever.

A gust of wind was the cause. Had it not come just then, he would now have satisfied his thirst for revenge—for blood; and Black Joe and Igluruk would now be lying corpses at his feet.

He reviewed in thought his journey, beginning from the Kugerakuk, and reflected how near he had been several times to catching the fugitives; but it was as though some favouring spirit held

150 Frozen Justice

its hand over them; every one helped them, although they were guilty of so much evil. And his thoughts went still farther back—to the first time he had seen the two white men on the beach at Nuwuk—yes, and Mr. Hastings, the man who talked about God, the white men's God, who was so much better than all that the Eskimos had believed in before. What was it now that Hastings used to tell them about this God? . . . He pondered—oh yes, God protected the good, the missionary had said, and punished the evil. But all that was nothing but words—in fact, it was certainly untrue; since now, when the God was put to the proof, he had failed and had helped the wicked. For even in the eyes of the white God they must be wicked—those two, who had done all that Black Joe and Igluruk had done—but still he helped them in every way, and had thrown obstacles in the path of him, Sakhawachiak, who only desired to avenge the evil.

That was not right of the white men's God; he could not possibly be so just as Mr. Hastings had said, and was assuredly no use when all was said and done. Or else he was partial—but that was not so very strange, all the whites helped each other, so why should their God be any better?—of course he helped the white man. . . . No, he ought never to have listened

to Hastings' words—the God he talked about could never be good to the natives.

Shakawachiak clenched his fists in impotent fury. "Up there he sits," he burst out, stretching his arms towards the sky; Hastings says so—and now he laughs at me because I believed I could revenge myself on a white man. He is a bad God for us, but perhaps good enough for the whites; let them keep him—I'll never believe in him again, I'll never hear of him again, his name shall never be spoken when I am present."

Sakhawachiak shook off his thoughts, they were idle, and more vital things claimed his attention; he stood up to see the extent of his danger.

The ice-floe on which he was adrift was quite small, a hundred feet or so in diameter, no more; and on this bit of ice he was rapidly sailing away from land. Black wavelets played around it and lapped its edges, greedy to snatch the prey which their ally, the wind, had brought them.

But Sakhawachiak was not minded to let himself be taken so easily—he moved as far as possible from the edge of the floe and looked around—for what?—he himself scarcely knew. It was not the first time Eskimos had gone adrift on the ice, but they had never come back to tell what had happened. Some of them perhaps had

152 Frozen Justice

reached the mysterious land, far away in the north, beyond the pack-ice—the land which was warm and full of reindeer, musk-ox and bears—the land where there was said to be boundless hospitality and food in plenty. There perhaps they had settled, those castaways—at all events they never returned to tell the tale.

From the time he was a little child he had heard about the treacherous ice, which would open behind a venturesome hunter, cutting him off from the fixed ice-foot, so that he could not return to land. His father and all the grown-ups had warned him against the ice and he had heard countless stories about ice drifting out to sea, taking with it one or more hunters. During his whole hunting life he had been cautious—until now, when he had run his biggest game to earth—he had forgotten his caution just as he was ready to strike the game down—and now he was drifting out, away from land, alone, without food, to die.

He looked around. There was water all round his piece of ice, black and ominous; the wind was off shore and drove the floe farther out, towards the pack-ice, which lay a little to leeward of him. But that offered no safety, for if his little floe got into the ice it would be caught up in its witches' dance and ground smaller and smaller, while huge blocks of ice would crash down over

its edges; beneath their weight the floe would crack up, go to pieces, diminish, disappear—no, in the pack-ice he would be worse off than he was already.

Suddenly he remembered the dogs which were harnessed to Joe's sledge; he swung round in a flash—where were they? At any rate he could keep body and soul together for a time on their flesh; but they were gone—they had swum over to the fixed ice before the lane had grown too wide, and the hope that had kindled so suddenly vanished as quickly . . . he was alone, alone he would remain, and in a few days' time the floe would bear upon its surface a motionless bundle of skins containing a frozen body—his, Sakha-wachiak's.

He shuddered for a moment: it is always hard to think of death, doubly hard when one must pass into it through days of agonizing starvation. But he pulled himself together—often and often he had looked death in the face, times without number it had stretched out its arms to take him—but hitherto he had always given it the slip and had only thought about its summons after the danger had been overcome. Until today he had met death fighting, had had his chance and the odds had not been unfair; but now—he was drifting helplessly towards it, he could do nothing to avert his fate, only wait, suffering

hunger and thirst, wait an intolerable time, for death, which was sitting somewhere or other among the ice-floes, watching him with dark, empty sockets.

He walked restlessly up and down—still keeping up the struggle lest he should freeze to death. There was no snow with which he could build a hut, or a wall to shelter him from the wind that blew icy-cold from the dark, sheer cliffs of Cape Lisbourne.

The day closed in, night fell, and still he paced backwards and forwards. But nature claimed her right: he fell asleep and did not wake till the sun was up. He leapt to his feet, would have continued the pursuit as he had done so many times before, but stopped—ah yes, of course, he was drifting with the ice, the others were saved, it was he who was going to his death. And Sakhawachiak sat down disheartened, drew his legs under him, and with both hands round his ankles and his head resting on his knees remained immovable, as though death had already claimed its prey.

He sat for a long time looking at the land—then suddenly woke to life—what was that? Cape Lisbourne now lay to the northward of him and he could see the whole coast down towards Point Hope. During the night, while he slept, his floe had got into a south-going current, and he

was drifting slowly and quietly along the coast.

That aroused him. He was once more travelling southward, rather more slowly than before and with no control over his movements, but still in the right direction; and there was the chance that his floe might pass so close to the shore ice at Point Hope that he could jump on to it. As long as the floe kept clear of the pack-ice, all was not lost.

He walked up and down his floe, and each time he came to its southernmost end he stopped and shaded his eyes from the sun while his keen sight scanned the horizon—would he not soon see the long, low sandy promontory—Point Hope?

But the sun sank in the west and dipped down into the sea; its rays painted the ice in glorious colours, pink with deep shadows, it gave life to the great white floes and set them in relief; and even the land to the eastward, the high, steep coast-line, was gilded by the rays. Every unevenness, every ravine, every watercourse showed up plainly, and the land, which before had looked so grim and dark, grew bright and friendly.

This lonely man adrift on the little ice-floe, on whom death had set its mark, stretched his arms towards the land—still hanging on to life and longing to be there, where life was possible. But the spark in the west went out—the colours vanished from ice and land, and everything grew

156 Frozen Justice

darker, though the sky still glowed—one ray shot across it like an arrow of fire; it lit up all the little clouds that hung below the blue of the sky, making them blush deeper and deeper under the last caress of day. The ray of sunlight shone brighter, shed its light on clouds which suddenly appeared to view bathed in the sun's beams; and then the last glow disappeared—everything became dark, only black and white remained, and night closed in. But at the southern end of the little floe stood Sakhawachiak, motionless and still: his keen eyes searched the horizon watching for Point Hope, and he gazed anxiously out into the waning daylight.

But the sandy promontory was not to be seen, and with a sigh Sakhawachiak turned away. By the changing contours of the land he could tell he was drifting south, but slowly, mortally slowly, especially when he thought of those two, who had long since found a refuge with one of the many whites living at Point Hope.

That night he slept again—but a disturbed sleep. He was so cold that his limbs grew stiff, and many times in the course of the night he had to get up and stamp up and down the ice-floe to make the blood circulate faster in his frozen body; and besides that he was hungry and thirsty. He could moisten his tongue with small lumps of ice which he warmed slightly in the hollow of his

hand before putting them into his mouth; but that was a small relief and only aroused an insatiable craving for water, for a rippling brook beside which he could lie and drink his fill.

When the sun rose in the east its rays fell on Sakhawachiak walking restlessly up and down, up and down the ice-floe, slowly, like an old, worn-out man.

But it was not so bad as that—yet; he walked slowly on purpose to save his strength for the final bout, which could only be won if he retained his full powers.

The sun rose higher: it threw its light over land and ice and made the distance visible; suddenly Sakhawachiak was brought up by a sight that made his heart beat faster—there lay Point Hope, clear and sharp, and the floe was drifting in the open coast water nearest the shore ice.

Sakhawachiak sat down and looked at the point—he could have reached it with dogs and sledge, or even on foot, in quite a short time, long before the sun was in the south. But he was drifting with the current and it did not run fast; he must curb his impatience for—ay, for what? Sakhawachiak did not know himself what he would do or what might happen when he came nearer to Point Hope—but one chance he still had, if only he got so far.

His hunger tormented him and influenced his

158 Frozen Justice

mind with increasing force. Of course he had not yet forgotten Black Joe and Igluruk, he still thought of his revenge—but even as he sat on the ice nursing his hate, the two slipped out of his thoughts, driven away by his craving for food and drink; there was room for nothing else in his brain—all else was indifferent if only he could get food.

Instinctively he watched all round and slipped noiselessly down on to the ice. He whistled in soft, enticing tones, for out in the water was a seal, standing upright and looking at him with great brown eyes. It twitched its small nostrils and turned its head from side to side in order to hear better—then it dived, but slowly and circumspectly, and came up again soon after—nearer the floe, where Sakhawachiak lay, rifle in hand. He whistled and scratched on the ice—this last a language that the seal understood. Hullo, here was a comrade basking in the sun's warm rays! It made the seal inclined to come up itself on to the sunny floe. . . . It dived, but came up again, nearer than before, suspecting nothing; but then Sakhawachiak happened to frighten it by a sudden movement. The seal paused, then raised itself in the water to dive, dive deep and never return.

He must act now or never, though the chance of reaching the seal was very slight—the shot

rang out, and the seal was hit as it stood upright in the water; its head was smashed, the brown trusting eyes lost their brightness, and it fell over, dead. Sakhawachiak flung down his rifle and ran to the edge of the floe to see if he could reach the dead animal: but no, although the seal was floating on the surface it was so far from Sakhawachiak that he could not possibly get it.

He saw the red blood trickle out of the wound in the seal's head, dyeing the water scarlet; he saw the red, juicy flesh where the bullet had entered—and he sat down on the ice, as near the seal as possible, looking at it with longing, greedy eyes. His hands moved nervously, as though he were cutting it up; and his whole mind and body yearned for the food that lay drifting so near to him, yet so infinitely far off.

How he longed for a piece of that juicy flesh! It would satisfy his hunger, slake his thirst; and he cudgelled his brains to find some means of drawing the seal in to him. Then he had a happy idea—pulled off his anorak in a second and cut some narrow strips from down the front, thereby providing a line, which, though rather stiff and unhandy, improved when soaked in the water; he made fast his knife to one end and threw it out at his prey.

The line fell over the seal but got no hold on

the smooth, slippery body; it slid off, and time after time he tried without success.

Then he tried using his knife as a javelin; he hurled it at the seal, and at last succeeded: the knife stuck quivering in the seal's back—now he had only to haul in, slowly, cautiously, and he would soon have food.

The seal came nearer, but then the knife worked loose in the soft flesh and dropped out; and while Sakhawachiak hurriedly hauled in his line for another throw, he saw to his horror that the seal was sinking.

Only slightly so far; the seal still lay with its black back awash, but sinking it was, sinking deeper every second.

With feverish haste he made another cast with the knife, got a hold and pulled—too hard: the line snapped—and there lay the seal with his knife in its back, nearer indeed but nevertheless lost for ever.

He could just reach it with the end of his rifle, but what was the use of that? The seal sank, disappeared, while a big blood-red bubble rose over the place where it had floated. Sakhawachiak sat still watching the bubble get bigger and bigger, glistening with blood and oil—then it burst, and with it his hope of food.

For a moment this had a paralysing effect on Sakhawachiak, but then he sprang up and clenched

his fists in impotent fury. So near to food and yet to be cheated of it!— His hunger came upon him again with redoubled force, that gnawing hunger which he could not satisfy. All luck had deserted him,—alone, adrift on an ice-floe, and now starving for two days.

All at once the thought of Black Joe struck him and his hatred blazed up—yes, of course, that man had to be killed. Sakhawachiak turned round to look at the land—and there lay Point Hope, just level with him. While he had been working with the seal he had got into a tidal stream, which was rapidly carrying his floe in towards the point.

He could clearly see people running to and fro on the beach; he saw them gather in groups and point at him with excited and threatening gestures; but there was still a lot of water between him and the shore ice—to reach it was out of the question.

But Sakhawachiak was not going to let those people think he was in fear of his life or on the point of starving to death, so he drew himself up to his full height while the little ice-floe drifted rapidly on towards the extreme end of Point Hope. There was still hope; only when the point was passed would he be irrecoverably lost, for then it was a hundred miles to the next land, right across the great Kotzebue Sound.

162 Frozen Justice

Faster and faster the floe drifted on, now properly caught by the tide, which raced past Point Hope like a mill-stream. It bore in towards the promontory; the dark belt of water grew narrower and narrower, it was only a question of minutes: would the floe foul the ice-foot or drift past? The suspense was intolerable.

Nor was it only the man out on the ice who felt the suspense—there was excitement ashore, people running down, and Sakhawachiak easily recognized the heavy gait of white folk. Then he made out Black Joe and Igluruk as leaders of the whole crowd; they turned to the natives and shouted something, then ran on again to the extreme point, where they stationed themselves hand in hand and waved in exultation to their beaten enemy.

And there Sakhawachiak saw Igluruk again.

In a flash he saw all their life together; he remembered his pride and joy in calling Nuwuk's loveliest woman his own; he thought of her tenderness, her delight in his unchallenged position as leader of the men of the place. He thought of the last time he had seen her—when he was starting for the Kugerakuk—and then of all his bitter thoughts about her since. They overwhelmed him; he sank on his knee, threw his rifle up to his shoulder, aimed long and carefully—at her—and pulled the trigger. But the range was

too great, the bullet fell short, and when the smoke cleared away there she stood still—laughing; he could see her, curse the woman! And in his insensate fury he sent shot after shot in her direction.

They were shooting on shore too, all of them: the like of this sport had never come in the way of either natives or whites. He recognized the voices of the latter when they shouted anything to the natives, and he heard the yells that answered them. He did not know the meaning of it—that the white men had promised the native who hit Sakhawachiak a whole year's provisions—but the rifles cracked away, and now and then a bullet reached his ice-floe. He threw himself down on the ice and fired till his last cartridge was spent—then flung his rifle into the sea; even that, the white man's weapon, had failed him now. He stood up, a sure target if the rifles could have carried so far, but now he was beyond Point Hope and every minute the range increased. His eyes remained fixed on the land—the last he would see—and there, on the extreme point, standing on an umiak turned bottom up, were Black Joe and Igluruk. They waved their arms and shouted words which he could not hear, she tore a handkerchief from her head and waved it . . . then they tired of that, jumped down and walked up inland, waving once more from the

164 Frozen Justice

top of a hillock, then disappeared—Sakhawachiak had seen Igluruk for the last time.

When the floe had passed the projecting end of Point Hope the stream slackened, and he drifted down along the shore ice, away from life. And now, after the excitement was over, hunger again made itself felt, worse than before, far worse. He sat down in the middle of the floe and waited, waited calmly for what was to come.

He sat as though asleep—motionless. Seals put their heads up out of the water and looked at the tranquil figure. He took no notice—for he had no weapon to get them with; he longed for death, while day departed and night spread its dark shadows over the crouching man, the restless wanderer, who was now on his last journey, waiting, waiting to reach the goal.

When the sun rose he sat there still, as immovable as when it went down—he merely turned his head to look back at the land. Point Hope had sunk beneath the horizon, but land was still in sight—the steep mountains of the coast from the point eastward rose above the white surface of the ice; those nearest dark and sharp, those farther away softer in outline and more subdued in colour, while farthest east the blue mountains melted into the colour of the sky. And still he drifted on, as the current bore his floe southward.

It was only the ingrained habit common to all children of nature, of looking around them every morning when light follows darkness, that made Sakhawachiak momentarily interested in the land—for he was past it long ago, it was lost to him and he had no illusions on that score—he knew for certain whither he was bound and that there was only one issue for him, the bitterest of all, the last of all, death.

Then he shrugged his shoulders half resignedly at his own folly and sank back into a state of torpor . . . still, stock still he sat upon the ice—starving.

Spring was in the air, the sun was shining, and he was glad of the relief it gave after the cold of the night; it warmed his body and kept him from freezing to death, but hunger gnawed him worse than ever, for now it was the only physical discomfort he felt.

He could not keep his thoughts from food and remembered the many delicious meals he had enjoyed in former days. He thought of the food he had squandered—enormous quantities of it, which might have kept him alive a long, long time. To what purpose? Oh well, to none, since he must die in any case; he could never reach land and food would only have prolonged the agony; so perhaps it was best as things were, for the end would come all the sooner.

He tried to be satisfied with that and for a time succeeded, but then his thoughts reverted to Nuwuk, to the life up there. Now perhaps his former comrades had just caught a whale and were sledding in to land with meat and blubber—masses of them. Blood flowed over the trail and the dogs were bathed in it, so that their coats stood out from them in little blood-drenched tufts. He saw the bloody picture plainly and it stimulated his craving for food . . . ah yes, he would be satisfied if he could only have the blood on one of those dogs' coats, it would strengthen him a little and drive away that gnawing feeling of hunger. And with a slow smile he thought of all the meat and blubber there was in Nuwuk now, inconceivable quantities for a starving man.

His body he could control—it did not move; but his thoughts were unmanageable, and one picture after another of former superfluity passed clearly before his eyes. His fancy called up an endless succession of luxurious feasts and other, more modest meals—he had been short of food before, but never like this—and for a long time he sat enjoying his thoughts—wonderful past, a good thing one can sometimes live in it!

A splash recalled him to the present and his gnawing hunger: a seal which, itself unseen, had long been eyeing the motionless figure, had been frightened by some sudden movement and dived.

Ah well, he thought, there was a time when I could go hunting—and then the seal would not have escaped; but now I am harmless. And he moistened his lips with his tongue—the thought of food had been so intense that it was almost as if he had had a meal.

But hunger soon refuted that—it overwhelmed him with renewed force. “Food, food!” he burst out; “if only I had a little food!” And suddenly he remembered how he had carried his provisions on his back nearly the whole way from Nuwuk—might not there be a little bit left?

In feverish haste he searched his clothing . . . no, there wasn’t a scrap; but in moving he felt the empty sheath of his knife dangling against his hip and seized it—it was sealskin and at any rate he could chew it.

For a long while he sat munching at the dry sheath, wishing with all his heart that he had a knife. Then he could have cut the sheath into little bits and swallowed them—but he had no knife and so his teeth had to do the work. He chewed and tugged and tore with his teeth at the dry skin, which gradually dissolved in the saliva. It gave him work for his mouth but was of little use to his stomach.

The sun sank again in the west, and darkness fell around him as he still sat chewing. His jaws ached, his teeth pained him, but he could not

168 Frozen Justice

resist the desire of gnawing at the dry skin—he thought it relieved him, but his mouth got full of sour-tasting saliva and he wanted something to slake his thirst.

Having no knife he could get no ice, but he scraped a little snow together and pressed it hard in his hand before putting it into his mouth. That gave relief for the moment, but it was only a short respite; his thirst returned, more violent than before.

That night was a cruel one.

Starved, tortured by a burning thirst, without shelter in a rising storm, Sakhawachiak sat freezing and longing for death—why could it not come and deliver him from the racking needs of the body? he longed for rest and peace.

When day broke again he lay asleep. The wind came tearing over the ice, driving loose snow before it in dense clouds. It was piercingly cold and yet merciful; for the snow it carried along packed around the death-doomed body that drifted on the little ice-floe, southward, along the shore ice.

Now there were no sunbeams to wake him, or to warm his cold body . . . long he slept on, heavily and uneasily, and even in his sleep hunger and thirst tormented him.

At length his eyes opened and blinked in the snow—what, still alive?—but he did not move,

his body was heavy as lead, his joints utterly stiff; why should he try to get up when he was quite comfortable where he lay? Peace and rest had fallen upon his tormented spirit; he felt his hunger, but no so badly as before; his thirst he relieved with snow—as for the cold, he scarcely felt it.

He lay long awake, dazed, uncaring; but then his craving for food returned all at once with smarting violence.

Half delirious he lay thinking of meat, fresh and juicy, longing for warm, nourishing blood . . . blood—ah, what was that about blood? —he had been thinking so long about blood—yes, of course—Igluruk . . . and the object of his journey pierced through to his consciousness —she was to die, and black Joe too.

He shut his eyes and thought it over . . . die—those two; how was it, weren't they dead? —hadn't he shot them?

In vain he strove to collect his thoughts. The wind whistled around him, the snow whirled high, and great drifts were piling up under the lee of his body; but he could not think clearly, and all the while his thoughts revolved about the idea that somebody was to die. He saw blood behind his closed eyelids—nothing but blood and flesh. What was it? whose was it? . . . Igluruk's, of course—she had been shot, he had

170 Frozen Justice

shot her—and Black Joe—now they were no longer man and woman—only dead meat; he could eat them and live—ever so long.

Mechanically Sakhawachiak stuffed small balls of snow into his mouth and slaked his thirst; but in his delirium his unchained fancy fed on the corpses of the dead.

Soon all would be over.

Half dead with hunger, half frozen, entirely torpid, he no longer felt the needs of his body. His nerves no longer reacted, but his brain could still work—and in an instant his thoughts flew from the almost lifeless lump of mortality on the ice-floe in Kotzebue Sound up to Nuwuk. . . . He was sitting in his old iglo, felt its comfort . . . not so strange, either—the cosy oil-lamp hung just beside him.

A thrill went through him—a feeling of warmth . . . but his thoughts ran on—Igluruk, where was she?

Not in the iglo . . . funny, she used always to be somewhere near . . . well, perhaps she's out . . . come back soon. . . . Who's that speaking?—what's that? . . . dead—who says so? . . . shot . . . well, perhaps it's true—he couldn't remember. . . . The Kugerakuk? I'll go tomorrow . . . oh yes, a long journey . . . Icy Cape. . . . Black Joe going too, why? . . . For a moment Sakhawachiak awoke to conscious-

ness and considered. . . . Black Joe, that cursed white who had stolen his woman, his peace. . . . But it was only a second or two and he was away again. . . . Whose woman? . . . well, it's all the same . . . I'm lying here nice and warm . . . it doesn't matter to me whose woman it was. . . . I'm quite comfortable . . . warm . . . well-fed. . . .

But the storm howled, the small black foam-topped waves lapped around the ice-floe and the snow settled thick and soft about the dying man, while the floe drifted southward, along the shore ice, away from land, out into Kotzebue Sound.

IX

OUT on the shore ice, right in the middle of Kotzebue Sound and near the open water, Takluksrak had camped for hunting seal and walrus.

He was not alone; his four sons and their women and children lived with him. They had built themselves a little town of snow-houses, six in all, one for each family and the last as a store for skins.

The sun shone warmly after the preceding day's storm; its rays fell upon the little snow-town glittered across the frozen waters and lit up myriads of ice-crystals; they played on the open water beyond, which had now borrowed the blue of the sky. All was bright and cheerful at Takluksrak's camp out on the edge of the ice.

The women sat at home outside their huts enjoying the warm sun, as they scraped skins or filled big bladders with blubber. The children helped as well as they could, but were always on the look-out for something more amusing; they yelled and shrieked when one of the voracious dogs came slinking up to steal a piece of meat unobserved, and, if that was no use, the whole

crowd of small persons threw down their work and pursued the impudent thief with laughter and jubilation across the ice.

The women watched their children and laughed—they glanced across the glittering wavelets at their men, dashing hither and thither in their light little kayaks after seal or walrus or racing each other—and they laughed again—why not be happy and light-hearted? the cold, harsh winter was safely over and spring had come, bright and glorious; they had food and to spare, more was coming in, sorrow was banished, life was an easy matter.

Thus they laughed, these young women on the edge of the land ice, chaffing and putting their heads together amid much giggling and silly talk, while they discussed their men, who were now coming home, urging their kayaks over the water in a race for who should get in first.

They all ate their fill, men, women and children; then, when they were so stuffed with food that they could scarcely move, the whole population of the camp sat together and chatted.

The day's work was done, soon it would be bedtime—but behind the iglos lay a lofty hummock, from the top of which there was a wide view, and every evening in fine weather they were in the habit of going up there to throw a last glance over the sea: possibly some sleeping seal

174 Frozen Justice

was just drifting by on an ice-floe, an easy prey—so laughing and joking they set off together, all of them, grown-ups and children.

Many pairs of eyes scanned the ice to the south, west and north. “Look, there, there’s a seal!” All turned and looked: yes, sure enough, a little ice-floe was drifting along in the open land water, bearing on its back a sleeping seal. The youngest of the brothers, Uxra, was sent out to take it, while the rest of the family settled down on the top of the hummock to watch.

Uxra shot off rapidly in his light kayak. The sun shone on the wet paddle, sending flash after flash to the group on the ice—now he had nearly reached the floe and the still sleeping seal.

He raised his harpoon and leaned back in readiness to hurl it—but dropped his arm again; evidently he had changed his mind. “What now?” exclaimed the spectators on the ice; “what is he up to?—is he thinking of bringing the seal in alive?”—and they laughed, all these light-hearted souls, immensely amused at the youngster’s idea—for his behaviour was certainly odd: he paddled slowly up to the floe, lay still for a long time gazing at the seal, and then paddled right round the piece of ice, cautiously and with hesitation. Again he stopped still; then ran the bow of the kayak up on to the floe, crawled out of it and went up to the seal—not as he usually

walked, with quick and springy steps, but slowly and falteringly—as though he were afraid.

What could it mean? What would he take into his head next? And silence fell upon the expectant group while they watched Uxra's movements with tense interest. They saw him go round the seal in constantly decreasing circles; then he stopped a moment and bent forward, almost touching the animal. His brothers held their breath in surprise: what could he be about? —and surprise turned to uneasiness when Uxra sprang up and ran back to his kayak. Quickly he got into it, and with foam at the bow and a long double wake astern he raced towards the edge of the ice. He shouted, waved, and they all ran down to the water—a strange hunt, this!

Breathless and sweating from his rapid paddling Uxra drove his kayak up on to the edge of the ice, where his kinsfolk were standing. "It's a man!" he shouted, out of breath; "but he's dead. He's lying out there on the ice-floe half buried in snow."

A dead man!

A shudder went through the Eskimos, so happy a moment ago, but now suddenly brought face to face with the sterner side of life. Yes, life is hard on the coasts of the Arctic, hunting is perilous, death reaps a big harvest. Today it is a stranger who succumbs to the fury of the el-

176 Frozen Justice

ements, tomorrow perhaps it will be myself—no one can feel himself safe—some mischance, some accident, and death comes—perhaps it is already stretching out its arms to take us—the ice may have cracked to landward of the camp, may crack tonight, while every one is asleep, and tomorrow we may be adrift with the ice, like the corpse out yonder.

They huddled together and looked at each other with scared eyes—death is always so hard to understand; but curiosity prevailed over fear. “We must see who it is—Uxra, did you know him? was he killed or frozen to death?”

Uxra could not say—he had not given himself time to investigate the corpse so closely; but in a trice an umiak was got ready and launched, and a few moments later all but the children were on their way to the floe.

They approached warily, rowed round the ice-floe once—twice—while they looked at the corpse and discussed in low tones who it could be. The first uncanny feeling soon wore off—after all there was safety in numbers—and they had to examine the corpse, for it might be the body of a friend.

They landed and crept carefully up on to the floe. The dead man lay on his side; he had drawn his legs up under him and the snow had nearly covered his body.

Snow and rime hung on the long hairs of the anorak over the dead man's face—it was almost hidden—who could it be? He was not from Point Hope—his dress was different from that they wore there. He must come from the far north, from Icy Cape or Nuwuk.

Silently they stood looking at the dead man who had drifted so far with the ice: what must he have gone through: what must he have suffered, before he found peace!

But suddenly the Eskimos gave a start and shrank away shuddering—the rime which hung down over the dead man's mouth moved just a little.

They looked at each other—was he not dead after all? Was it possible that the ice, cold and hunger could give back their prey? They huddled together, not one of them would go near the thing that lay on the ice—they had better jump into the umiak and row away—back to the camp where they had been so happy just now . . . and yet . . . think if the man were alive! Soon perhaps one of them might be in the same case.

At last old Nanegarak, who was Takluksrak's woman, took heart and approached the man, slowly and hesitatingly. For a long time she stood and looked at him; then she bent down

178 Frozen Justice

resolutely and thrust her hand up under the anorak to the man's heart.

In silent suspense the hard-trained, weather-beaten hunters stood watching those two . . . then she rose up: "Make haste—he's alive!"

All fear of the dead and dread of the unknown vanished; the skin-clad folk were active again at once and all were anxious to help. Gently and cautiously they carried Sakhawachiak down to the umiak and rowed away to the hunting camp.

It took a long time to get life into him, but it was not the first time they had had to deal with stiff-frozen, starved people. They went to work slowly and methodically. His frozen limbs were thawed, warm seal-meat broth was poured into his mouth—they wrestled with death for its prey, and slowly, infinitely slowly, Sakhawachiak glided back from the Kingdom of Death into the land of the living.

For a fortnight Takluksrak stayed out by the land water, and the laughter and chaff grew silent whenever they passed the hurriedly-built snow iglo where the sick man lay, nursed by Takluksrak's daughter, Douglamana. But the sun was gaining power; it wore away the ice; time after time they had to move their little sealing town farther in, lest they should drift out to sea. Now they no longer dared to stay there, and with Sakhawachiak, still only half conscious and wholly

delirious from fever, on a sledge, well packed in warm skins, they migrated to their regular summer camp on the shore of Kotzebue Sound. There it was that Sakhawachiak came to himself and took a new lease of life.

A silent man he had always been; now he was more silent still. They knew who he was, and that he came from Nuwuk—but how he had got adrift on the ice, and where and why, he did not mention. They did not ask, either: the sick man might speak if he liked, or hold his peace if he preferred it. But Douglamana, who had recalled him to life and nursed him ever since, often sat bent over the sick man, while her thoughts sought far and wide for an explanation. In his delirium he had talked, but only incomprehensible words.

No sledges came; it was too late in the year—the snow was soft. Nor did any boats come—the ice was not melted yet. So Takluksrak with all his clan was cut off from the outer world and did not get in touch with the Eskimos of Point Hope until long after he had returned to land. Then people arrived in umiak and kayak, and they told the story of Black Joe and Igluruk and all about Sakhawachiak's furious chase.

For the sake of a woman? That was incomprehensible: they could not understand it. A woman is only a woman—if one runs away you

take another; there was nothing more in it than that, and there were plenty of women. Why hold on to one as fast as Sakhawachiak had held on to Igluruk, especially when that one was no use? No, let her go and thank your stars for it! Many and long were the discussions in Takluks-rak's big tent and Sakhawachiak was the subject of them. His importance at Nuwuk was not made any less in the telling, and the Eskimos knew how to appreciate the journey he had undertaken—but they never could understand any man doing what he had done just for the sake of a woman.

Except Douglamana. She was still young and had long been looking out for a husband. Now the ice had brought her one, and she felt a sort of proprietary right over the still ailing Sakhawachiak—for it was she who for many days and nights had fought with death for the unconscious man—she had won, and the man must be hers.

She knew the whole story about Black Joe and Igluruk—she had it both from the north and the south—she knew that Black Joe had sledged down to the south coast of Kotzebue Sound, to a place where many white men live. She knew that Igluruk was with him, but had also heard that Joe was still possessed by fear, and that it had driven him still farther south, clean away beyond Sakhawachiak's reach, over the great seas to the white

men's country. As to Igluruk, she knew that Black Joe had deserted her, and that she had another man, a white, several in fact—and lived at Candle, the gold-diggers' town.

That story did not worry her, and as she sat in the tent beside the sick man she yearned for him; and when Sakhawachiak got better and began to go about again, Douglamana moved from her parents' tent into his.

Autumn came, and Sakhawachiak grew as strong and active as before. He went hunting like the other Eskimos, killed seal and walrus in the sea and reindeer on land; a good hunter he had always been, lucky too as a rule; he could easily provide for his woman and have something to spare, so he was able to give old Takluksrak both skins and oil in exchange for his daughter.

Sakhawachiak's life with Douglamana was a different one from that he had lived before. Formerly, besides looking after his own work, he had had to see to everything indoors—Igluruk, the half-caste could do nothing. But Douglamana, the pure-bred Eskimo, had learnt a woman's duties since she was a little child: she could clean skins and tan them, make clothes better than anybody; and when Sakhawachiak came home, tired from hunting, he felt a sense of well-being as he sat in his tent or in the winter iglo, watching Douglamana's nimble fingers. She never was

182 Frozen Justice

idle, always busy, even when cooking she found time to work at other things—she was just the mate to suit him, the industrious, hard-working Sakhawachiak.

They talked about everything—the present, the future too; but the past—no, that was never alluded to. All that went before Sakhawachiak's awakening in the snow-iglo on the land ice in Kotzebue Sound, he kept to himself—it was dead and buried. Douglamana never asked questions—it was before her time, did not concern her; but when Sakhawachiak sat idly in the iglo, kept at home by furious winter storms, he would be silent and reserved for hours at a time. He would gaze before him with an absorbed air: was it Igluruk he was thinking of then, or the white man's villainy? Was it that fearful journey along the coast in pursuit of the two that occupied his thoughts? Was it perhaps death, which he had felt in his soul—or was it yearning for Nuwuk?

Douglamana did not ask, but sat still in her hut; she looked at Sakhawachiak and longed for him to speak, but never troubled him with unnecessary questions—it was best as it was.

Sakhawachiak spent a couple of years on Kotzebue Sound and soon became the leader there as he had been at Nuwuk; but he never felt really at home and often longed to be back in his own country. There was more peace and quiet up

there, the plains were more spacious, the hunting better; and in springtime his blood would warm at the thought of the brave, thrilling battles with the whale.

Down here everything was on too small a scale, the hunting included—he longed, longed uncontrollably for his native place. He talked it over with Douglamana—they agreed, and one early spring, the third after his coming to Kotzebue Sound, he loaded a sledge with his few belongings and set off northward.

They had no reason to hurry, so the journey took time; they stopped when they came to places where the hunting seemed good; and they spent the winter on the coast, halfway between Cape Lisbourne and Icy Cape.

But when the following spring came, Sakhawachiak could no longer master his restless blood and his longing for Nuwuk, and the few household things were packed once more on the sledge. Douglamana went in front to show the way and encourage the dogs, Sakhawachiak beside the sledge with a hauling strap over his shoulder, and thus they left the little hut where they had spent the winter—but not alone: a little boy peeped over Douglamana’s shoulder from the warm shelter of the anorak.

They went northward slowly, but expected to reach Nuwuk before the snow melted and made

184 Frozen Justice

sledging impossible. But they were not making much progress; if there was a storm they halted, and if the hunting on the way was good, they stopped again to eat their fill and gather strength for the next spell of sledging. Why should they hurry? the whole coast was their home; Nuwuk, when all was said and done, only a meeting-place.

They were nearing Icy Cape and met strangers from the north, inhabitants of the settlement. These had forgotten Sakhawachiak and their harsh treatment of him on his southward journey—it was only an episode, a passing glimpse, gone and forgotten. And he?—well, he harboured no rancour, no hatred towards his countrymen; he understood their conduct, dependent as they were on the whites and incited by their lies. No, it was best to let bygones be bygones—to remember nothing but the lesson: beware of the white man!

So Sakhawachiak met his countrymen without bitterness and was glad when he came upon the first from Icy Cape; now he could get news from Nuwuk—communication between the two settlements was not infrequent.

The Eskimos from the north were full of news, but not from Nuwuk; there was something that lay nearer to land—famine and misery were devastating Icy Capes and its inhabitants.

The whaling fleet had got into difficulties in the

ice on their way in the year before. Some of the ships had worked their way through and escaped into open water, but six vessels, including four large ones, had been forced in to the land by the ice, frozen fast and had their sides crushed in in the course of the winter.

The crews numbered about five hundred men. Their provisions were exhausted; and though the Eskimos had had successful hunting, that went no way in supplying the need; famine, nay, worse, death from starvation threatened not only the whites but also the whole native population.

And there was sickness too—many had died—sorrow and misfortune followed now as ever in the white men's track.

Sakhawachiak and Douglamana were silent a long time when they heard the news. She looked at him with questioning, beseeching eyes—thought of the little one who hung on her back, and shuddered at the thought of Icy Cape. But he did not see her, nor yet her beseeching eyes—he was thinking of the white men, the enemies of the natives, and rejoiced at the disaster that had overtaken the race which had destroyed peace and quiet on the coasts of Alaska.

Never had he spoken to Douglamana about the white men's wickedness, never told her that it was a white man who had well-nigh sent him to

186 Frozen Justice

his death; he kept that to himself, but hated the race with heartfelt hatred—and he fancied he could see Black Joe, smiling, handsome, but false, the very symbol of the white people.

A long while he sat lost in his meditations on injustice and contempt, while Douglamana watched the play of his features and tried to guess its meaning. For she knew the story of Black Joe and Igluruk and knew that he was now nursing his smouldering hate and blowing new life into the dying embers; and she felt that something she could not exorcise had come between her and Sakhawachiak, and that her power over him was gone.

She bowed her head and took her little child out of the warm anorak: if anything could hold Sakhawachiak back it was surely that little being. She caressed it a moment, then took the child in both hands and held it up before him. He pushed it aside and got up—“Come, Douglamana!”

An hour later they were on their way, Sakhawachiak urging his dogs northward towards sickness, hunger and want, towards the frozen-in fleet and its five hundred men; he wanted to see their sufferings, wanted to enjoy their destitution, wanted to sit and watch till the whole lot fell away, shrunk up, died of starvation.

So he urged on the dogs and made the woman

hurry—the wild gleam had returned to his eyes and Douglamana no longer knew him.

They drew near to Icy Cape and could see the masts of the doomed ships; he whipped up the dogs and encouraged them—there was no peace for his mind till he could see the white men suffer.

Death had set its mark on the settlements: the Eskimos' cheeks were hollow, their caches were empty of meat—hunger gnawed them already—their dogs slunk about with a strange shadowy gaunt look—the curse of white men was upon the land, and in impotent fury Sakhawachiak shook his fists at the hulls. “Away with them, the scoundrels,” he muttered—“let them die. Then the natives will have something to eat, but not before—to feed so many months is quite impossible.”

There were no white men ashore, they kept on board; and Sakhawachiak drove his sledge past the settlement, out to the ships, and there camped in full view of them.

Sakhawachiak sat outside his tent eating—he enjoyed the sight of the white men standing on deck watching him. Then a man came across the ice; it was one of the skippers. “Have you got food?”

“Yes,” replied Sakhawachiak; “I have got food. Would you like to see it?” and showed

188 Frozen Justice

the white man the meat he had brought with him on the sledge, grand juicy meat.

"Can we buy it?" asked the white skipper with a greedy look; "what do you want for it?"

But Sakhawachiak only laughed, a hard, evil laugh. "To a white man I sell nothing. . . . I am sitting here to enjoy seeing the white men starve, and I will stay here 'till the punishment they have brought on themselves is accomplished."

The white man's face flushed and he looked as if he would strike the native; but Sakhawachiak did not stir—*this* white man was not dangerous.

And he laughed to see his undisguised greed for the meat. "So you need food, do you? Ah, that's bad; I needed it myself one time and came near starving to death—that was the white men's fault."

"I guess the other natives around here have starved too," said the stranger—"but they didn't refuse to share with us. We need food, I tell you, need it badly; we're dying of starvation. Give us a little of what you've got on your sledge . . . but tell me first—who are you and what makes you break the first commandment of Alaska—to feed the hungry?"

"Sakhawachiak!"

"From Nuwuk?" and the white skipper gave a low whistle. "Oh well, if you're Sakhawa-

chiak of Nuwuk, why . . ." and he turned on his heel and went back to his ship. He knew all about Black Joe and the vanished Sakhawachiak; knew too that the whites of Point Hope had fired on him, but he had never dreamt that he was still alive.

Sakhawachiak sat on outside his tent watching the ships with a look of hatred; his rifle lay beside him, ready to shoot, if it came to that. He saw that word was being passed from one ship to another in the doomed fleet, and the excitement caused by the news. Men came up on deck and stared towards the land, towards the tent that stood all alone near the ships—and at the man who had food but refused to sell it to famished white folk. And rumour had more to say about the man, Sakhawachiak—that he had been looked upon as dead for the last three or four years; that he had got adrift on the ice and had passed Point Hope—still drifting—and now he was sitting over there with a sledge load of meat, the only meat at Icy Cape, and wouldn't sell.

Sakhawachiak jumped up; his eyes hardened—what was this, were they going to try a set-to with him? For a group of men, all whites, was approaching over the ice. Did they mean to use force?

The group came nearer, and a big bearded

190 Frozen Justice

man stepped up to the native. "Sakhawachiak, do you know me?"

He looked at the emaciated face and nodded—yes!

In a flash Sakhawachiak's thoughts went back to Nuwuk, to the happiest days of his life, when he was still the great hunter and had whalebone to sell. At that time this man who was standing before him humbled and wasted by starvation, had been his best friend—James Smith, skipper of the *Narwhale*.

Sakhawachiak thought of the many times this man had shown him friendship; once in particular, long before Jim Hacklet and Black Joe came to the country, when the hunting had failed and he had no whalebone or skins with which to buy goods. Then James Smith had let him have supplies for a whole year, and Sakhawachiak had promised him friendship for life. He bowed his head and thought—bitter thoughts. He hated the whites and considered he had good reason to do so; but was it right?—after all, there were good men among them. Was it not unjust of him to hate them all?—was it not wrong?—here was a man, his friend, who had once helped him—was he to refuse him help in return?

Sakhawachiak rose and gave his hand to James Smith. "Yes, I know you; you are my

friend and helped me many times. But all the others . . . ?”

“Look at them—don’t you know any of them?”

Sakhawachiak looked round the circle of faces . . . ay, ay, there were old acquaintances among them: the skipper of the *Mayflower*, was there, and the skipper of the *Mary Rose*, good friends both of them; several he knew, their mates too—these were not such bad white men. And he went round shaking hands with them—“This is a bad business.”

“Come aboard, Sakhawachiak,” James Smith was again the spokesman; “we know all about Black Joe and Igluruk—he’s no good, nor she either; don’t think any more about them or the trouble they’ve made. But you can help us if you will; and what do you think yourself? is it right to revenge yourself on us for what others did to you?—Sakhawachiak, there are bad Es-kimos too.”

A struggle was going on in Sakhawachiak: his old sense of fairness awoke; why should these men suffer because others of their race were villians? It was wrong, bad of him . . . he did not hesitate long, but raised his head and looked at the white men. “What do you want me to do?”

“Come aboard,” said James Smith—“and you

192 Frozen Justice

shall see." Together they walked out to the ships.

First they boarded the *Narwhale* and went below, followed by the rest. The mate of the vessel, also a former acquaintance, lay in his bunk; his gums were swollen and purple, his eyes dull and his hand clammy—and Sakhawachiak turned away; but his eyes fell on another sick man, and a third—all victims of scurvy.

"Come with me," said James Smith; "I can show you more."

They entered the coxswains' quarters—all were down, with blue and swollen limbs. Among the harpooners it was the same—sickness everywhere; and in the forecastle more than half the crew lay in a stinking, stifling atmosphere, poor emaciated wretches who stretched out their hands to Sakhawachiak as the personification of health.

He bent his head: no, they had not exaggerated, the Eskimos he had met running away from the horrors on sea and land—this was worse than they had told him.

He went round with James Smith from ship to ship and saw sickness and want everywhere: emaciated men with the mark of death on them, who scarcely cared to turn their heads at the approach of a stranger. But they woke to life, all of them, after he had gone—what was this rumour that was going round the fleet? Could it

be possible that help was really at hand? Was it true that James Smith had at last found a man to sledge down to the white men's country with news of their distress?

When Sakhawachiak returned to the *Narwhale*, Captain Smith and the others accompanied him into the cabin—they sat round the table in silence.

"Well, Sakhawachiak;" Smith began at last—"what do you say now?"

"They will die," said Sakhawachiak; "all those who have scurvy. . . ."

"Yes, and a lot more too," broke in the skipper of the *Mayflower*; "not a man of the whole crowd will get away alive if we don't get help."

"Steady, steady," Smith warned him in English; "leave it to me. He knows me best and has promised me friendship. He won't break that promise, I'll be bound." And turning to Sakhawachiak he went on: "You know, Sakhawachiak, that there are whites at Point Hope; they can help some . . . but farther off still is the white man's country, and that's where help will have to come from. We've tried to find a messenger; nobody dares go, nobody can go, except you. Now you've seen for yourself how things are. Black Joe did you a wrong, maybe other whites have too—but *we* haven't. You've known several of us for years and you know we're

194 Frozen Justice

good men—are you going to let us die on account of Black Joe?"

Sakhawachiak sat in silence at the cabin table—he thought of Joe and of his hatred of the whites, which urged him to leave them shift for themselves—but was it just? Would he not be behaving worse than Black Joe if he refused his help? Could he do it?

"Think of your own countrymen over there"—and Captain Smith pointed towards the Icy Cape settlement—"they will die too, if help doesn't come."

"They helped the whites," said Sakhawachiak sharply; "they chased me out of the place like a mad dog. Where are Tom and Richard—where's Fritz?"

"Gone, quit the country long ago," answered Smith; and there was a brooding silence in the close cabin while they waited in suspense for an answer.

"I have a woman here, Douglamana—a better one than Igluruk; what about her?"

"Take her with you or let her stay; you have some meat on your sledge—she shall keep the whole of it, and if we get any game she shall be the first to have some. You can trust me." And Sakhawachiak knew that James Smith spoke the truth.

"I will speak to Douglamana," said Sakhawachiak, getting up to go; but the white men would not let him. They felt that he was half won over and feared he might change his mind if he once went ashore to his woman. "We'll send for Douglamana."

In a little while she came, with her son on her back. "Did you call?"

The case was quickly explained to her and she understood what they required of her husband. Her eyes were wet with tears . . . oh, those endless days on the sledge! It was a good deal to ask. But she looked at the serious faces of the white men and knew that much was at stake; she bowed her head and answered: "As you will, Sakhawachiak, but I will go with you."

Long they sat silent—Sakhawachiak was at the parting of the ways: hate and friendship were struggling for the mastery. If Black Joe had never come into his life he would have gone at once, without a moment's hesitation . . . but now?

"You shall have whatever you like for it," James Smith tempted him; but Sakhawachiak cut him short. "If I do it, it will be for your sake, for the sake of the friendship I promised you, not for payment"—and he relapsed into silence. Captain Smith saw that he had made a slip.

196 Frozen Justice

"Do it for the sake of our friendship then, Sakhawachiak. I and all the others will always be your friends."

"White men's promises are not good," answered Sakhawachiak shortly. "I know you and several of the others; I believe you will keep your word. But I don't trust white men any more—I've learnt what their promises are worth."

The white men hung their heads: it was only too true, and in despair the skipper of the *Mayflower* dropped his head on his arms and sobbed aloud: "My God, my God, we shall all die!"—but this outburst of self-abandonment spurred Sakhawachiak to a decision. He banged on the table. "Don't talk of your God; I once believed in him, but I have discovered that he is the worst of everything that is white. Very well, I will do what you ask. If your God can't help you, I will!"

The next day he drove off southward, along the trail he had so recently followed, accompanied by Douglamana, their child and a young Eskimo.

He had the best dogs to be found at Icy Cape and the best sledge; a little food he had too, but only enough for a day or two; the rest he left behind. He had to travel light, he had to drive fast, if help was to arrive in time. He would get food as he went, for there was game everywhere; and accompanied by the heartfelt good wishes of

the white men he drove off to bring help to those he hated most.

He reached Point Hope after a rapid, forced journey, and when he met the whites of the place it was as the friend and rescuer of the five hundred men at Icy Cape. They no doubt remembered their first encounter, when they had fired on him at Black Joe's request, and the white men felt ashamed; but Sakhawachiak did not allude to it: what was the use of raking up old scores that were best forgotten? He had chosen his line: to help where help was needed, whether the needy were natives or whites.

He delivered his letters, and two days later ten sledges started for the north with medicine, vegetables and as much food as could be sent—relief for the time being; but the same day Sakhawachiak drove out across Kotzebue Sound, while Douglamana and the child were left behind with her family; for now the journey must be a hard and rapid one, if the message was to reach the white men's country in time.

With a convoy of six sledges he headed outward, away from land, and disappeared in the distance; but three days later the Eskimos on the south coast of the Sound saw a strange sight: a procession of sledges approaching from the north across the ice—a reckless adventure, the act of a madman—but it saved time and the long way

198 Frozen Justice

round: Sakhawachiak had risked it and had come through.

With his best dogs harnessed to three of the sledges he went overland to Port Clarence. There he met several white men, who read the letters from their brothers in the north and looked in astonishment at the tall, slim Eskimo who had defied all dangers and made the impossible possible—delivering a message so far south ten days after receiving it at Icy Cape.

But this was not the end of the journey; after a night's rest in a white man's house, where he was treated as the friend of the whites, he dashed on again towards the south, accompanied by their best musher, and came out on to the great Norton Sound.

Once more the trail was across the ice, at a headlong tearing pace, and twenty days after Sakhawachiak had given his hand to Captain Smith on the promise of help, he stood in the sheriff's house at St. Michael and told his story of distress.

The telegraph did the rest: it ticked out a message to the south, to San Francisco: "An Eskimo arrived from Icy Cape after desperate forced journey with news that whaling fleet is caught in ice. Five hundred men starving and attacked by scurvy, will die unless help comes."

The men at the other end of the wire were

quick to act; they would not shame the Eskimo's exertions. The answer came back: "Customs steamer *Corwin* leaving Unalaska and if ice allows will call St. Michael for provisions and medicine. Thence she will proceed as far as ice permits and when further progress with ship becomes impossible boats will proceed northward. Tell Eskimo to wait, Captain Hobson will take him as pilot."

Two months and a half later the crews of the whaling fleet saw a line of boats working their way northward in the land water. In the bow of the leading boat, a steam pinnace, stood an Eskimo . . . he nodded—straight ahead—and straddled a little to keep his feet when the pinnace collided with ice; but he kept on nodding—keep on your course, full speed ahead! and at its best speed the little craft darted past the land ice, in the open fairway between that and the drift-ice. Then he held up his hand—the engine stopped: "There, Hobson, you do the rest; we're there!"

Help had come, brought by Sakhawachiak. Fifty men had died in the meantime, but the greater part of the crews were saved—saved by Sakhawachiak, the man who hated the whites.

He would not hear of reward, nor even of thanks. He gripped the hand of James Smith, now down with scurvy, when he went aboard the *Narwhale*. "You helped me when I was in a

200 Frozen Justice

fix—now it was my turn to help you. You are bound south and I north, but if ever you meet Black Joe, tell him that if he comes here I'll kill him."

In the following year Sakhawachiak reached Nuwuk and settled there, but he did not stay long. He hankered after the free, unfettered life that the Eskimos had led before ever the white men came; he was well enough off, but could not feel at ease where white men lived. Of religion he would not hear, holding himself more and more aloof; and one summer, when the whaling fleet anchored off Nuwuk and James Smith hurried ashore to greet his friend, he found the iglo empty. Sakhawachiak and Douglamana were gone, away to the eastward, to places where he could live in peace and bring up his boys to be great hunters, without fear of the demoralization which follows in the white men's footsteps.

X

SAKHAWACHIAK made his home on a little island, far to the east of Nuwuk, and lived there with Douglamana and his two boys. He lived as the Eskimos had lived before white men came to the country and settled there, he trained his boys to hunting and sport, as he, his father and his grandfather before him had been trained—to look after themselves, to live on what the country afforded, never depending on the white men's assistance.

When the winter storms howled over the island, or in summer when the sea was open and free of ice, he went hunting seal, walrus and bear; but in spring, when the sun had gained power and there was warmth in the air, when the worst of the winter's snow had melted and moss and lichen appeared on the ground, he moved southward with his family, across the narrow sound that separated his island from the mainland, and hunted reindeer, which came down in great herds to the wide tundras that extend from the foot of the mountains right out to the coast—vast stretches of country that can harbour countless animals.

His winter iglo was large and roomy, built of

202 Frozen Justice

the driftwood that lay heaped up along the coast in immense quantities—trees that had grown far up in Alaska but in times of sudden thaw had been uprooted by foaming masses of water and washed into the river, on whose broad back they had slowly floated out to the polar sea; once there some drifted eastward, while the rest, by far the larger part, drifted to the west, carried along by the current and cast ashore by frequent storms, to become an inexhaustible store of fuel for the natives of the coast.

His summer tent stood not far from the iglo, on the highest ground in the island, whence there was a view over the sea and the drift-ice—ideal summer quarters for a hunter; everything could be seen from it.

Away to the east lay the low coast of Alaska, built up of ice, thousands of years old, but now covered over with earth, fertile and green. To the south—across the narrow sound—he saw the tundra, and beyond, far inland, the mountains, softened by distance but high and jagged, their tops covered with ice and snow that almost melted into the colour of the sky. But when the sun was in the east or to the north of west its rays fell on the north side of the range, giving profundity to the mountains, making them living and near; ravines showed up sharp and clear on their slopes, spurs became prominent, the chain

dissolved into separate mountains, divided from each other by deep and winding river valleys. The sun played over the whole scene, giving life and colour to the huge rocky giants, which flushed deeply in the rays of its rising or setting; then everything became tinged with a soft pink, and even the sheer mountainsides, rising grim and dark amid all the white, took on a friendly air.

To the westward lay island upon island in a long, straight line, low and flat, most of them only sand but with occasional green herbage; these were a favourite breeding-place of migratory birds, which came from the country to the south and hurried past inhabited places in order to settle where there were neither men nor foxes, where they could mate in peace, hatch their eggs and teach their young the art of flying, before the days shortened and grew dark and the time for their southward flight came round again.

Thus lived Sakhawachiak, far from Nuwuk and far from Herschel Island, which was a place specially frequented by the whalers. But he often heard news both from east and west of the white men's sway over the country—how station after station was established on the coast—and saw the realization of his fears: the Eskimos were becoming more and more the hirelings of the white men.

It happened now and then that umiaks put in

204 Frozen Justice

on their way from Nuwuk or Herschel Island, or even whaling-boats owned by natives, who were rapidly forgetting the art of building the light and handy skin-boats. Pale, sickly-looking Eskimos would then visit Sakhawachiak's hospitable tent; they talked half like the whites, whose customs, but chiefly whose vices, they had adopted; all that was bad they had learnt, but not much of what was good. They had bartered themselves for the white men's weapons and food, and cheerfully paid the price: ruin and dependence. Now they were a miserable race, who would perish if their white masters left the country,—a race dependent, accustomed to idleness and debauchery, for the most part kept by their women, who lived a life of careless ease when the whaling fleet was in, but starved and suffered want when it was away—a wretched people, with children half white, half native, with the worst instincts of both.

Sakhawachiak conversed with his countrymen, but felt relieved when they left again; then he would shake his head and rejoice that he lived there on his island, far from the whites, from their life and their influence, in a place where only its remote reverberations reached him.

And when the whaling-fleet sailed by on its way east, he followed with his eyes the dark hulls and tall, slender masts. It always made him uneasy

when they came—who could tell whether they would choose that very spot for their quarters and force him to move away once more? But only rarely did they anchor off his island; it was inconvenient for the whaling, there was nothing to be done there, not even trading; so they sailed on to better hunting grounds.

But there were some ships which stopped, among them one that was even welcome, namely the *Narwhale II*, commanded by Captain James Smith. He never sailed by without anchoring; a boat would be lowered, laden with white men's provisions, and rowed to the shore with James Smith in the stern sheets. The provisions were an annual gift to Sakhawachiak from the friend he had helped at Icy Cape, and from others in the fleet, who had never forgotten the service he had rendered them that spring, when they were frozen in the ice and dying of hunger and scurvy.

There was rejoicing ashore when Smith paid them a visit; Sakhawachiak felt a real friendship for him: he was one of the few whites on whom he could blindly depend. But the whaling season is short; there is not much time for palavering when the fleet is outward bound; and after the boat was unloaded and Smith had given Doug-lamana and the boys each a special present, he rowed back to his ship, weighed anchor and

206 Frozen Justice

headed eastward with a blast of the whistle and a dip of the flag—the sole link between Sakhawachiak's past and present.

And there, on Flaxman Island, far from the white men, Sakhawachiak lived for many a year, and became an elderly man.

One autumn day he was returning from a hunting expedition. The sun was shining, the sea was blue, it was warm and Sakhawachiak was happy, as he sat in the stern of his umiak, which, deep-laden with skins and meat and household utensils of all sorts, hastened westward, bound for Flaxman Island, for home, with his whole family, his world, on board.

Sakhawachiak was glad to be approaching his island—there he felt at home and secure from the whites—their hunting grounds were now much farther to the eastward; he need never fear that they would come here and drive him away from the refuge he had found years ago. No, all was well now; he had found the peace and calm for which he had always yearned.

But when he rounded the point his eyes stiffened into a fixed gaze; he felt a stab at his heart: was his peace only a dream? For under the lee of the island, in the narrow strip of water, lay a schooner, and his practised eye told him at once that she was not making a passage like all the other ships he had seen in the course of years.

No, she had come to stay: the sails were unbent, the vessel was covered with canvas from stem to stern . . . was he really to be driven away again, to look for another refuge from the white man?

He lowered his sail in silence and paddled the umiak up to the shore, made it fast and began to carry the load on land. He worked himself into a sweat, but his thoughts were farther west, on board the schooner—who was it, what did they want here, was his peace really at an end?

On board the schooner they had seen the umiak come heading round the eastern point of the island and were pleased, as the vessel had come to stay and the crew were glad to see Eskimos on the island—something to enliven the coming winter, people from whom they could buy meat and skins.

Sakhawachiak did not go near the white men; if they had anything to say to him, they knew where to find him, for he could see that they had been near his house, their tracks were plain enough: not far from it they had been digging in the earth, deep holes—extraordinary white folk, what were they after now?

A couple of days after his return, just as his winter iglo had been put in order and he had moved into it, he heard footsteps outside, the door was pushed open, and there in the opening stood two white men.

208 Frozen Justice

They smiled. "Good day," they said in the white man's language; "may we come in?" And Sakhawachiak nodded silently: better get it over at once.

The white men sat down and spoke a great many words which he did not understand, but Douglamana put the cooking-pot on the fire and offered the white men food. They joined in the meal and laughed—queer folk; they were white, and yet different from any Sakhawachiak had come across before. Strangest of all, they did not speak a word of his language, so they could not be traders in furs.

By signs they made him understand that they wanted him to go with them on board, and accompanied by Douglamana and the boys they all went out to the schooner—Sakhawachiak all the time wondering at the strangers.

And the ship was different from the usual whaling vessels or trading schooners. The cabin was large and roomy, and there were strange instruments everywhere, shelves full of books, pictures too, and in one corner lay skins of the commonest animals of the country, which had been carefully taken off but were of no value for trading.

There was a man forward who could talk a little Eskimo; he was fetched aft, and from him Sakhawachiak learnt something about these curious white men.

Not whaling, not trading, not buying skins, not doing anything—such was the information he received from the whites' linguistic expert. Looking for land—sledge-journeys—many days, much meat—was the next that he learnt about the white men's intentions; and that was the end of it, the vocabulary was exhausted. But round him sat men reading big books, and they laughed and spoke words—Eskimo words, strangely clipped, without meaning or connection, something they found in the white men's books.

Sakhawachiak began to feel calmer; these were different whites from those he had met before, they could certainly do him no harm; and he stayed a long time on board: there was so much that was new and that he had never seen in any whaling vessel.

When he left the schooner in the evening, he, Douglamana and the boys received presents—without something being required in return—and the two men whom he regarded as the skipper and—well, what could the other be? mate he evidently was not—almost another skipper (but who ever saw two skippers in one ship?)—invited him to come again and to come soon.

That night Douglamana and Sakhawachiak got no sleep: they were discussing the white men—these extraordinary people who had come to their

210 Frozen Justice

island and who did not want to trade or to go after whale, but only to buy meat; they were not going to do anything useful, but look for land—what land? The natives could not make it out at all; Sakhawachiak had never met whites of this sort. What did these people want—surely they could not be missionaries?

Before long however, Sakhawachiak understood enough of the white men's ways to make it clear to him that they were not missionaries, but intended to go northward over the ice—over the pack-ice, the terrible drifting ice which had claimed so many of his race. He could not rightly understand what they wanted to do there, but that was the white men's own affair and did not concern him; he could only be glad that they wanted to go out into the pack-ice—he would be rid of them all the sooner, no one ever came back from there.

Winter wore on and Sakhawachiak became good friends with the white men on board the schooner, especially the two who had first visited him—the two skippers. One was called Mr. Hodley, the other—well, it was a difficult word, his tongue couldn't manage it—the Eskimos called him Migi.

Sakhawachiak's fear of the whites had quite disappeared: there was nothing dangerous about these, and when he had once realized that, he

helped them in every way, became a frequent and welcome guest on board, and in the winter, when gales tore over the land, he often sat bending over big charts down in the cabin with his friends, who spoke his language by now—more or less, anyhow.

He knew that they were out “on an expedition,” but what that was he had no very clear notion; it was something about finding something—but that was their concern; he liked his new friends and was sorry when he saw them go out across the ice.

Many and long were the conversations in which he had warned Mr. Hodley and Migi against the rash undertaking: they would never come back to land again—at any rate not to his land, though possibly to the land away in the north, where it was warm and game was plentiful and the people so hospitable—but what was the good of reaching that land, when they could never come back and tell about it?— Foolhardy whites, let them listen to his advice and not go!

But they went, and they came back.

Land they had not found, but on the contrary water, deep water, and the white men were quite pleased about it. Strange white men, they were easily pleased! What profit was there in water?

Their schooner had been crushed in the ice in the course of the winter, and when the whalers

212 Frozen Justice

came by they took the whole crew off—all but Hodley and Migi, who were a long way to the eastward when the fleet arrived; so when winter came on again these two were alone.

One day Migi came up to Sakhawachiak. "Look here, I'm going home now, there's nothing more for me to do. Mr. Hodley is going up into the mountains, and as soon as the ice is safe I shall sledge over to Nuwuk and from there down the coast to the white men's country."

Sakhawachiak looked downcast: "Migi, my friend, stay here; the way is long." But no, Migi had decided to leave, and Sakhawachiak knew him well enough to see that it was impossible to dissuade him.

A couple of days later he came down to the hut which the white men had built out of the wreck. "Listen, Migi, are you really going away?"

"Yes," he answered; "I'm going as soon as I can get ready and the ice is safe."

For a long time Sakhawachiak was silent. Then: "Tell me, down in your country there must be old people like there are here . . . what do the old people do, if they have no children to work for them and get them food?"

"Starve," answered the white man without hesitation—"unless they have saved money to buy food with when they get old. Sakhawa-

chiak, our country is not nearly so good as yours. Here, if there is food to be had, the old people do not suffer want, but with us people die of starvation if they have no money."

Sakhawachiak made no answer, but sat gazing in front of him; his fine brown eyes saw nothing—he was lost in thought, and Migi saw that great problems were working in his brain.

"That's not right," exclaimed Sakhawachiak all at once; "it's a shame! when people get old they ought to have food, even if they have no money. . . . *Where* will you strike the white men's country?"

"At Candle," replied Migi, sitting down. "Sakhawachiak, my friend, what have you got on your mind?"—for it was clear to the white man that something more than curiosity prompted the Eskimo's questions.

"Listen to me," Sakhawachiak began again at last; "you know Douglamana is my woman and I am good to her. But now I'm going to tell you something that I've not talked about for many years, something that I've almost forgotten. You see, when I was young I had another woman; she was called Igluruk and she was so beautiful, but she was no good for anything. The white men took a fancy to her, and it was a white who took her away from me. He was called Black Joe. I was very fond of Igluruk,

214 Frozen Justice

and when I heard she was living with a white man I got mad. He ran away, she went with him, but I have since heard that she's living at Candle. She is old now"—Sakhawachiak continued his monologue—"and I don't think she has money. She can't work, she never could do that, so she is sure not to have earned anything; I don't want her to starve, for she was once my woman and I was fond of her. I should like to get her up here, even though she has wronged me."

"Yes, but, Sakhawachiak," Migi interrupted in astonishment, "you've got Douglamana—what does she say to this? Will she agree to having a second wife here in her old age, and can you feed two women?"

"I have talked to Douglamana about it," Sakhawachiak continued slowly and calmly; "she thinks as I do. We are sorry for Igluruk, having to live down there among the whites, suffering hunger and want, when she might come up here and live with us; and now that the boys are getting big they can help in the hunting. I can manage to feed two women, and even if we do go short sometimes, we have felt the pinch before and we shall get over it I have not thought about Igluruk for a long, long time," Sakhawachiak went on, "it was only when you began to talk about going down to the white men's country that the thought of her came into

my head. I have hated her and tried to kill her, but by degrees my feelings have softened. I myself have once starved, and I know how hard it is; and I don't want her to suffer, if I can help her. She was young and happy—once; and now that I have grown old I can better understand her preferring a white man to me; he could do many things that I could not, just such things as women like. And she had a white father too," he added gently; "Perhaps she was more white than Eskimo."

"Listen here, Sakhawachiak," said Migi earnestly; "consider this well. Igluruk has behaved badly to you, whatever the reason may have been; she ran away from you with another man and now she has been living a long time in the white men's country. She was not good for much before—and down there she won't have learnt anything good, so now she is less use than ever. You are happy with Douglamana, and even if she is willing to have Igluruk here living with you, it's not an easy life to have two women in the same iglo. There'll be trouble, Sakhawachiak; the peace you have looked for and have found at last will vanish. Give up the idea; forget Igluruk."

"But perhaps she is starving," said Sakhawachiak quietly; "perhaps too she is longing for her own country, as I did when I was living at

216 Frozen Justice

Point Hope. No, I'll have her up here, if it can be done. Will you take some skins for her?"

"Yes," said Migi, "I will, and I'll help her as well as I can; but I think it is foolish of you to want to get Igluruk up here—let that plan alone. Give me what skins you can spare, and I'll sell them when I arrive at the place where she lives; on that money she will be able to live comfortably."

"But not for long," Sakhawachiak said under his breath; "she'll spend it at once. No, let her come here, then I will look after her for the rest of her life. Promise me you will help her," he begged earnestly.

"You have time to think it over, Sakhawachiak, don't do anything hasty," the white man admonished him; "I will help where I can, but only on condition that Douglamana comes to me herself and says she will have Igluruk here. I daren't do it otherwise."

They sat a long while talking, Sakhawachiak more and more earnestly as the recollection of his former woman became more vivid, and Migi still trying to dissuade him; but all to no purpose—Sakhawachiak stuck to his guns, and when at last he went home, he promised to come next day with Douglamana.

Migi waited in suspense—was it really possible

that the Eskimo woman would allow her old husband to take back his first woman? Would she agree to a rival wife in her old age? Could she face the inevitable quarreling and dissensions which would be the result—simply in order that the husband, Sakhawachiak, might win peace of mind and do what he thought was right? But no sooner was it light than Sakhawachiak came, and Douglamana with him.

"Well," asked Migi, "have you changed your mind?"

Silent and serious the old folks sat looking at the white man; then Sakhawachiak shook his head: "No, we will look after her. You speak, Douglamana—let Migi hear what you have to say."

"Yes, Migi"—it was Douglamana who spoke—"I wish what Sakhawachiak wishes. It is a long time ago that he knew Igluruk, he has children by me, and however things turn out, I shall still be his best woman. We talked it over before Sakhawachiak spoke to you—I wish the same as he."

They were not to be shaken in their decision—Migi might talk as long as he liked about the mistake of having two women in the same house. The Eskimos stuck to their point, and with a heavy heart he gave his promise to take skins and

218 Frozen Justice

furs with him to Candle, sell them for the best price he could get and spend the money on buying a sledge and dogs for Igluruk.

It was a relief when the promise had been given. "I depend upon you," were Sakhawachiak's last words before he and his woman left the house and walked side by side to their own iglo. But Migi stood in the doorway looking after the couple. . . . He was thinking . . . who would have done this, except this Eskimo? what others could forgive as he had done?—and what woman would have stood by her husband in a case like this, except this same Douglamana?

And Migi looked after the elderly couple and thought of the future, when three would walk there instead of two. Sakhawachiak in the middle, Douglamana, splendid, capable Douglamana on one side, and Igluruk, ruined, perhaps pampered, incapable, on the other. What would Sakhawachiak think then? Would the peace and calm that had settled on that once troubled spirit continue?—or would it vanish and leave him in deeper sorrow than before?

When preparations for the journey were begun, Sakhawachiak and Douglamana came bringing skins and furs, the best they had; and when the day of departure dawned, the two old people came down to Migi's hut. They did not

say much—silently they went about watching their friend's preparations for the journey, helping quietly where they could; and when at last the sledge was ready and the dogs leapt forward impatiently in the traces, Douglamana came up with a little leather bag.

"Take this too, Migi," she said; "there is a fur in it which I made up to wear myself next winter. It is good and warm, give it to Igluruk; the journey is long and cold, she is sure to need warm clothing, and," she added with tears and a smile in her eyes, "Sakhawachiak says she didn't know how to make clothes in those days—and perhaps she has not learnt since."

With the charitable gift lashed fast on the top of the load Migi set out. He cracked his long whip, a short, sharp "Mush" rang out in the still frosty air, the sledge creaked in all its lashings, the dogs leapt forward—the journey had begun, a thousand miles' trip. But behind him on Flaxman Island stood Sakhawachiak and Douglamana, two sharp outlines against the clear morning sky—waving and shouting good-bye. The white man turned and waved back, while his thoughts pictured a scene six months ahead—then perhaps they would stand there again, close to each other on the same rise of ground, watching a sledge slowly and laboriously making its way eastward—bringing Igluruk.

220 Frozen Justice

Months went by. Migi drove slowly along the coast, met white men and natives, talked to all he met. The subject was usually Sakhawachiak: everybody knew his name, most of them knew his story—and Igluruk's. Still more knew of his helping the whites when they were frozen in at Icy Cape and would have died but for Sakhawachiack. And Migi asked all the white men to help Igluruk when she came northward along the coast; they promised to do so and would keep their promise—the man who saved the fleet that spring at Icy Cape had a claim on all white men—but they shook their heads: "Poor Sakhawachiak! It will never work."

On Christmas Eve, nearly three months after Migi had left Flaxman Island, his sledge was approaching Candle. The dogs were tired, their feet were worn, and he was not getting on fast.

He whipped up the dogs, shouted and yelled at them and himself took the hauling strap and pulled more than all the animals together. He was going to get in that night if it was at all possible; the dogs were travel-worn, he himself still more so, and he longed more than he could say for a little rest and comfort—even the little that Alaska's most northerly gold-mining town could offer.

So he struggled on; the short day had long given place to night, the sky was studded with

thousands of stars which twinkled and shone against its black background. But ahead of him were terrestrial and accessible stars, which shone from the gold-miner's cabins; these interested him more—they were the goal of his journey.

So Migi swung his whip with joyful, encouraging shouts: "Mush, come up, will you—we're soon in, can sleep warm and soft tonight!" And the dogs seemed to understand that the end of the journey was near: their driver's eagerness to get in infected them, and the nearer they came to the town, the better they pulled. When Migi drove his sledge round the extreme point and turned up the river, the tired dogs leapt forward in the traces—the sledge followed with a jerk, and he threw himself down on it, clutched it firmly, sat up, and drove proudly at top speed along the smooth ice of the river towards the town, now visible with all its lights, full of men and dogs. Houses stood on both sides of the road, people came out, staring into the darkness, and caught sight of a sledge that came dashing past, drawn by ten excited dogs which had forgotten all about weariness, hunger and sore feet. On the top of the load sat a man swinging his whip in exuberant spirits, laughing and shouting to all he passed: "Good evening, stranger!"—and the curious faces in the darkness smiled and shouted back "Good evening," before turning

222 Frozen Justice

back into their warm cabins and shutting the door—shutting in the blaze of light which came streaming out on to the road, an incentive and guiding light for Migi.

They shrugged their shoulders, all the inhabitants of the place, at this cheery sledge-driver; they were warm and well-fed now, but they had known the hardships of the trail and the joy of reaching their goal. They understood Migi's elation and sympathized—but when the door was closed they grinned at each other and stretched contentedly—“Did you hear that lunatic drive by? I wonder what kind of a tornado has struck Candle tonight.”

Migi found lodging for himself and his dogs. Strangers came and asked the news—bursting with curiosity. Where did he come from, this light-hearted dog-driver?—What was all the noise about, what made him so cheerful?—But when the report spread up and down the main street that the stranger came from the north, all the way from Flaxman Island, there was a moment's silence. These traveled people looked at each other—my word! And questions began to whirl about—why?—what brings him here in the middle of winter?—has he found gold up there?

Next day, after he had had a glorious night and

Frozen Justice 223

slept like the dead, in a real bed, Migi called on the sheriff and inquired for Igluruk.

"Igluruk?" this personage answered slowly, considering. "Who is she? I don't know her."

Migi was discouraged. If she was not here, where was she? Was he going to disappoint his friend, old Sakhawachiak, who was expecting his first woman, away up in the north?

"Think again," he said to the sheriff. "She came here some fifteen or twenty years ago, an Eskimo woman who had run away from Point Barrow with a white—a man called Black Joe—now do you know her?" But the sheriff shook his head: "You've come to the wrong place, my friend; there's no woman here called Igluruk."

But suddenly an idea struck him. "Aha, stranger, do you mean Sweet Mary?" and he winked one eye and laughed. "So it's her! Yes, she's often visited by men who come off the trail—but I must say it's the first time I've been asked in my official capacity for her address. Young man, you take my advice and keep away from her."

"Why?" asked Migi sharply.

"Why? oh well . . . because . . . however, that's your affair, you can do as you please, I only gave you a friendly piece of advice. But now you mention her name, I seem to remember

224 Frozen Justice

it, and I guess there was something shady about that story. She came here before my time, but some of the older hands here had a story about a man who arrived with a woman. He was pretty scared; he dumped the girl here and cleared—God knows where to. What was it her Eskimo husband was called—it was the fellow who saved the crews at Icy Cape—Saca—?"

"Sakhawachiak," said Migi, upset by the sheriff's words; "yes, he's a good man, a friend of mine."

"You don't say!" said the sheriff, and whistled; "and the woman?"

"I don't know her, but I've got a message from her husband, the first one—Sakhawachiak. I spent the winter with him—two winters, in fact, and know him well. He asked me to look her up and send her to him; he will keep her—he thinks it's a shame she should live so far from friends."

"Good Lord almighty!" exclaimed the sheriff with conviction, "you don't mean that! Why, she's no use now, not for anything in this world. She does a little washing and helps the men sometimes . . . she is absolutely done for; it'll never do to let her go back to her own country, she'll do too much harm there. Goodness knows we'd be glad to get rid of her—she only does harm here—but just think of what she'd do up there!"

They talked about her for a long time, and Migi told the sheriff about Sakhawachiak and Douglamana, about the furs he had on the sledge, about the new warm clothing and the two old people who were waiting up there, a thousand miles from Candle. The sheriff sat quietly listening. "Poor things," he said when Migi had finished; "poor woman! But look here—go down and see her, and afterwards we can talk it over."

Migi walked through the town, out to some small cabins which lay in a group by themselves, miserable, dilapidated-looking hovels—women's shrieks and men's loud laughter came from them. The worst scum of the mining town lived there. Migi kept his head down; he did not care to be seen round here.

He asked his way, found Igluruk's cabin, knocked and went in.

Some time elapsed before his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness of the room and could distinguish objects—a bed, a small table with remains of food on it, clothes thrown all about—fearful untidiness and a terrible stench.

Igluruk sat on the bed half-naked. "Ah, a stranger, come in!"—and with a smile she rose to meet him. Her fat bust glistened in the semi-darkness, her hair was unkempt and fell over her shoulders in matted strands, full of feathers and

226 Frozen Justice

animals' hairs. "Come in, stranger, welcome."

Migi sat down on a chair. "Igluruk!"

She started and looked at him searchingly: "Who are you?"

"I come from the north," answered Migi, "from Nuwuk. Do you remember Nuwuk?"

The woman sat down; she was shaking in every limb and her eyes took on a hunted look—but she said nothing, only nodded.

"I have lived up there," Migi went on—"for some years. On a little island, a good way to the east of Nuwuk. I met a man there—he sends a message and his greeting."

"Stranger," she said in a tearful voice, "who was it?"

"Sakhawachiak."

The woman laid her head on her arms and sobbed. "Does he still remember me?"

"Yes," Migi answered; "he remembers you, and he asked me to go and see you and to say that he is afraid you are in want. He would like to help you—can he help?"

Igluruk wept . . . it was a long since she had thought of Nuwuk, of the happiest time of her life, when she was Sakhawachiak's woman . . . memories overwhelmed her, and she wept, wept so that her whole body shook. Poor woman.

When she grew calmer Migi talked to her about the past, about her home, about her friends

there, Sakhawachiak, while he watched her face, devastated by debauchery, sickness and want.

But the stifling odour of the room soon drove Migi outside, where he filled his lungs with the pure, clear air. Slowly he made his way back to the sheriff, at a loss what he should do.

"Well?" asked the sheriff; "what do you say now? Have you seen her? She's a beauty, isn't she?"

Migi shook his head. "Yes, sheriff, you're right. It would never do to let her go back to Sakhawachiak. But what are we going to do? I have the whole sledge full of furs—what do you propose?"

They talked it over at length and called in the parson. It was hard to decide what to do, but in the end they agreed that the furs should be sold and the money deposited with the parson, who would give it out to Igluruk when she needed it most; she could not live long, in the state she was in.

And thus it was settled.

The furs fetched several thousand dollars, a lot of money to Igluruk, and Migi went to tell her of the arrangement.

She was half drunk, had forgotten their former meeting and advanced with a pleased smile to meet the welcome guest. "Good day, stranger."

Migi sat down. "Now, Igluruk, you've got to

228 Frozen Justice

listen to me. Sakhawachiak has sent me here to ask whether you will go back to him and whether you can make the journey. What do you think—can you do it?"

She shivered at the thought. "Journey, I?—no, impossible; I'm too old. . . . I made the journey once, a terribly hard one . . . but now—I neither will nor can; I haven't forgotten my last journey."

"No I thought not," continued Migi; "you cannot travel; but Sakhawachiak gave me some furs to sell here in Candle, so that you might have money for the journey. This money—"

"Money?" she interrupted with a greedy light in her eyes—"did he give you money? Give it me—at once—you want to steal it from me; all white men do that. Where is the money?"

"I haven't got it here," said Migi, "and you won't get it all at once. But when you are very hard up, when you have nothing to eat, go to the sheriff or the clergyman and they will give you money."

It was as though an evil spirit possessed her at the thought of money. "Give me the money at once! Curse you, you white devil, you're robbing me!"

Migi got angry. "Be quiet, woman and listen to me. I'm not going to steal your money; on the contrary, I have brought money for you

Frozen Justice 229

which you would never have had but for me. I've had hard enough work to get here; but it will be as I told you—the money is not going to be wasted, you won't get it now—only when you need it."

"How much is it?" asked Igluruk with a greedy leer.

"I'll not tell you that either," Migi answered sternly; "but here's a little for you, enough for a celebration. Tomorrow I am going on and you'll never see me again, but I shall send word to Sakhawachiak that you are dead—it's a shame that he should go on thinking about you."

"Do what you like!" shrieked Igluruk; "do what you like, but give me the money, now!"—and Migi laid on the table forty shining dollar pieces—and then went, feeling sad on Sakhawachiak's account, and sickened with the woman who stood in the doorway calling after him: "Thief, scoundrel, you're stealing my money!"

That evening Migi spent with the sheriff. They talked of Sakhawachiak and of Igluruk, unworthy of his fidelity if ever woman was; and as he went home he heard howls and laughter from the group of little cabins where Igluruk lived. He smiled a tired smile—he had sledged far, Igluruk had been often in his mind and he had believed the worst of her; but even so he had been surprised at the completeness of her fall

230 Frozen Justice

and ruin. And he thought of the two old folks who were waiting on Flaxman Island—for her who would never come.

Next morning Migi was awakened by some one knocking hard at his door. It was the sheriff. "Get up, stranger!" he said. Migi slipped into his clothes and went out to the silent sheriff, who would not say what made him call so early. The town was not awake. The sheriff led the way in the direction of Igluruk's shack, and a group of men who were standing outside opened out when the two came up. "Look, stranger!"—and there lay Igluruk in the snow, half naked, stiff, cold, dead. Drunken, she had gone outside her cabin . . . the cold had struck her and she had fallen . . . the biting frost had done the rest.

At last she had found peace.

Date Due

PRINTED IN U. S. A.



CAT. NO. 23233

TRENT UNIVERSITY



0 1164 0022797 5

.PT8175 .M62F713

Mikkelsen, Ejnar

Frozen justice.

DATE

ISSUED TO

19618

